

MARGARETTA,

COUNTESS OF

RAINSFORD.

A

SENTIMENTAL NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



D U B L I N :

Printed for J. POTTS, at SWIFT'S HEAD, in
DAME-STREET, and J. WILLIAMS,
at No. 5, in SKINNER-ROW.

M,DCC,LXX.

MARGARETTA

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RAEFORD



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VOL. I

By Mrs. Hemans

Author of "The Bells"

&c.

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MDCCCXV



Mariana Cole
MARGARETTA,

COUNTESS OF
RAINSFORD.

LETTER I.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

PLACED on the summit of happiness, from whence proceeds that heavy oppression under which I seem to labour!—uneasy heart! thou art even overloaded with the weight of thy own felicity! look about thee! see the blessings that surround thee! shake of the languor that oppresses thee!

VOL. I.

B

Dearest

Dearest madam, how strangely capricious is my humour! I have no wish unsatisfied; yet feel a sensation like affliction, restless, uneasy, apprehensive. The earl has been absent only three weeks, and I hear from him often——his letters do not threaten me with abated love; yet methinks, in the stile of those I have lately received, there wants something of his usual unreservedness. Pardon, best of men! this ungenerous suspicion! you are all good! you are all amiable! I accuse myself! I only am to blame.

Lady Emma Chelsea and Sir Edward Onslow are walking yonder——I go to them——my dearest mother adieu! I blush at my own weakness, and will no more appear before you till it is effectually corrected.

LETTER

L E T T E R II.

To the S A M E.

A GAIN madam, elate with gladness I seek your presence; my doubting heart reassured, and that heaviness of which I complained dispelled like the vapours of the morning,—neither the powerful force of reflection, nor the animated conversation of my friends, has brought on me this change of humour; my lord! my husband! my Rainsford comes! why was I uneasy? why apprehensive? does he not fly to meet me with impatient ardour? has he not dispatched the business that called him from me with almost magic expedition? sweet reflection! how soon, how unexpectedly he returns.

One of my lord's attendants hastened on before to give notice of his approach, who left him only ten miles from the castle. Lady Emma and sir Edward are gone to walk in the park; they impor-

tuned me to go with them, but I have withstood their intreaties—great as I feel my present happiness, I feel it capable of addition, from your participation,—a miser has no greater pleasure than counting over the sums he has amassed. I confess myself a miser—rich even to profusion I contemplate on my possessions, and am lost in exulting transports—where is the favoured mortal who can boast such a mother, such a husband, such sisters, such a friend as mine? Wonder not that I place amongst my brightest gems the friendship of Sir Edward Onslow. It was my lord's commands, when he first introduced him to me, that I should love him as a brother—to tell you, madam, that he is the dear the bosom friend of my Reinsford, paints him in the strongest colours, wise, beneficent, humane—to tell you he is a favourite of Lady Emma, speaks him polite, lively, entertaining; to say he is held in the same favourable light by our sex in general, speaks him gallant, handsome, courteous,—if cowards fear him, he must be brave; if the indigent revere him, he must be generous; if I esteem him he must be virtuous: I could not esteem, as I do Sir Edward, a bold, a designing, or a vicious man—when I say he is a favourite of Lady Emma, I mean
no-

nothing more than that she has eyes, and cannot avoid seeing he is amiable.

Sir Edward is the eldest of seven sons, the second a lieutenant colonel, married, and now at Gibraltar; the third commands a ship of war; the fourth is a captain in the same regiment with his brother; the other three are at Westminster school, and not one of those six but are under pecuniary as well as tender obligations to Sir Edward.

Eight o'clock and my Lord not come! heaven grant no accident retards him—perhaps he stays on the road for refreshment—yet so near the castle!—only ten miles short of it when the servant left him! he knows not my impatience! imagination can form no idea of it! too too slow will move the hand of time till I again behold the lord of my wishes. Hope, fear, and expectation so much perplex me, that I will try to turn my thoughts on a subject less interesting, and yet but too much so; alas! poor indiscreet Nancy Saxby! you say, madam, since she came to you, she seems thoroughly ashamed of her misconduct; indeed had I not believed her a very Magdalen in her penitence, rather than secure her an asylum in your house, my lord should have been acquainted with her

imprudence, what would have been the consequence? He resigned his trust, she flung herself into the arms of a footman—wretched girl! what speed was she making towards destruction! how soon would she have reached the goal, had not the fellow's vanity timely discovered the intrigue.

My lord will certainly enquire for his ward as soon as he has received my first welcome; I am prepared, and shall tell him she is with you, though not on what occasion.

You know, my dear madam, George is the favourite and particular servant of my lord; how then in his absence can I venture to dismiss him without declaring for what offence? Lady Emma, who knew the whole affair, advises me to continue him till her brother's return. She says it will not only be the means of concealing Nancy's shameful wickedness, but perhaps prevent the completion of her ruin: idleness, she justly observes, might put it into his head to molest the poor silly girl, though placed under so revered a sanction. Nature has endowed him with some talents above the vulgar; at his pen he is amazingly clever, and often serves the earl in quality of amanuensis; but, notwithstanding he finds the means of making himself useful, I hope very speedily

speedily to get him removed from the castle without suspicion—if at his dismissal, Nancy's virtue is not sufficiently guarded against his arts, nothing can save her from the fate to which she hurries. How strange is it that her father should take so little care of this, his only child's education; a neglect which my lord has often assured me, proceeded more from indolence than want of understanding. He loved him on account of some trivial favours received in the lifetime of the late earl; his gratitude is boundless, and since the death of Mr. Saxby, he has looked upon himself rather as the father than the guardian of his daughter. I hear lady Emma below; she enquires if her brother is arrived: if she is so impatient, what then must be my impatience? Her ladyship knocks at my closet door; instantly, my charming sister shall it open to you. Nine o'clock, and my lord not come! Lady Emma leaves me to dispatch a servant. Ah! I am full of apprehension; what can detain him? only ten miles. Dearest madam, I quit you abruptly: my lord is this moment arrived; I go with open arms to receive him.

LETTER III.

To the SAME.

DEAR madam, I am strangely alarmed! Should my lord have discovered the imprudence of his ward, what will become of me for concealing it from him! Is it possible the silly creature can have betrayed herself to him in the late three days he passed at her asylum? No! such a suspicion would be absurd: from whom then can he have learnt her misconduct? Perhaps he is ignorant of it; perhaps I mistook his meaning; I hope I did. However, madam, let me tell you what it is that hath fluttered my spirits to a degree which I shall not soon recover.

My lord came to me just now with a kind of gloominess on his countenance, which I have never before observed in the whole season of my felicity. But ere I proceed with this interview, I must relate a circumstance that did not escape me without some uneasiness; it was this: Last
night

night, on his arrival, I thought he met not my endearments, or the caresses of his sister and his friend with his accustomed warmth. We had scarce enjoyed his presence a moment, (at least to me it seemed but as a moment) when he complained of fatigue, and retired to his apartment, refusing all refreshment, and desiring we would excuse his indisposition, which made him unfit for company. I offered to attend him, but he said he would by no means suffer me to leave Sir Edward and lady Emma. They were so good to withdraw at an early hour; and as soon as I found myself at liberty, I hastened to my lord, who was fallen into a sweet sleep; and by the caution I observed, his repose was not interrupted.

Awakened by the first dawning of light, I stole gently from his arms; and having put on my clothes, slid softly to my closet. I had just taken up my pen, when he came in quite unexpectedly; his brow was clouded, his air reserved, and his return to my affectionate enquiries after his health, broken and hesitating. He placed himself by me, and asked coolly, to whom I had been dedicating those moments of which he had been deprived? I told him, my intention was to have communicated to my mother, how happy his return had

made me; but now that I could enjoy his lordship's conversation, I should lay aside my design for a moment that could not so pleasingly be filled up. He made me no reply; but throwing one hand carelessly over the back of my chair, withdrew the other from mine, with a look so like indifference, that for a moment it startled me, yet the very next, I silently chid myself for suspecting the least abatement of that tenderness, so long, so well approved. Again I took his hand, and began to prattle of a thousand little matters which I recollected to have passed in his absence; for when in conversation with those we love, the most trivial will appear of importance. Amongst other things, I casually mentioned the permission I had given Miss Saxby to pass some months with you. I watched his countenance as I spoke, and was greatly shocked to see the sudden passion by which he seemed agitated. I shall be unhappy, my lord, (said I with emotion) if I have taken a liberty of which you disapprove: is it possible I can have offended you, by complying with your ward's request! As I said this, there darted from his benign eye a flash of terrifying resentment, which filled me with excessive horror; and falling back in my chair, I exclaimed, What can I have done, my lord, to draw on me this unkind silence, those looks

looks of killing displeasure? My sensibility softened him, or else his anger was risen to this frightful magnitude, partly by the force of my own fears: be that as it may, I was soon restored to my former serenity, by the most tender and passionate soothing.

I ventured once more to repeat my hope, that I had not greatly displeased him; adding, I had many reasons why I thought a visit to my mother not at all improper for Miss Saxby. Again I thought his reply given in terms too ambiguous for our security. If (said he) and there stopped, looking at me as though he would have glanced through my very soul, if you have given this proof of your indulgence to my ward from no other motive than what you profess to me; if you yielded only to her desire of attending our beloved mother, why should you fear my displeasure? Can you doubt, my lord, returned I, hesitating—No, no, interrupted he, pressing me to his bosom, I do not doubt my Margareta; my dearest Margareta never, never can deceive her Rainsford. Alas! I had deceived him; I was too conscious that I had, and my face glowed with confusion; happily my lord did not augment it by observation.

It was in this interview that he mentioned to me the three happy days he stole from his affairs, to spend with you at Row-Park; and told me also of your and my dear Fanny's surprize at his unexpected presence. We passed a most delightful hour together, after which he left me to pursue my first intention, bidding me say a thousand tender things for him to his revered mother and amiable sister, but not a word of Miss Saxby. He certainly has received a hint from somebody; if he is a stranger to her folly, from whence proceeded his unaccountable displeasure? Was there not something exceedingly mysterious in his behaviour? Perhaps he thought me too lavish of that power with which I was intrusted; perhaps he expected to have been consulted, before I presumed to have granted Nancy's request: it is possible this might occasion his resentment: but ah, madam! should this really be the case, should he be angry for a trifle like this, what has embittered the sweetest disposition ever man possessed? Must I not expect an envious cloud will often obscure my brighter prospects? Well, if it should so happen, I will patiently submit; nay, even then, may I not be happier than numbers of my sex who are infinitely more deserving? My lord cannot, will not, be premeditately unkind.

Assure

Assure Miss Saxby, my dear mother, that as long as she deserves your protection, she may depend on mine, and also on lady Emma's profound secrecy. A letter is this moment brought to me from that unfortunate, I hope I may add, reformed girl: I inclose it, as I suppose she has not had the confidence to consult you on it, the contents being confessional. I hope it is with a sincere abhorrence of them that she relates the circumstances of her disgrace. O! that so young a creature should be so designing! so amazingly artful! Her letter is really pathetic; her remorse touches me; I repeat my hope, that she may no be insincere.

Lady Emma summonses me to breakfast; she tells me the gentlemen are impatient; but adds, Don't hurry yourself, my dear sister, let them wait, let them taste disappointment; it is the only method we have of taming their lordly spirits. Ah! lady Emma, what charming gaiety is your's! —Adieu, my dearest mother.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

MISS SAXBY to MARGARETTA Countess
of Rainsford, inclosed in the preceding.

Honoured Madam,

COVERED with confusion, I fall at your Ladyship's feet, to confess the circumstances of that unhappy affair, which has brought me on the very brink of infamy. Unworthy as I am to approach you, madam, I will not presume to address you, but as a penitent criminal to a judge who is all mercy and forgiveness. Ah, my lady! could you see with what blushing confusion my eyes are cast on this spotless paper; could you see the trembling agitation of my fingers whilst I pollute it with my pen; could you see the self-torment I sustain, you would, I know you would, pity me! But dare I complain? Forgive this boldness, madam, and suffer me to proceed with my confession.

Unfortunate in the early loss of my mother: in an education unfortunate, alas! what

what has been the consequence? I mean not to reflect on my father's memory, or to extenuate my offence, but to shew your ladyship how far I was initiated in abject meanness before your lord removed me to the castle, where the most improving examples came too late : I beheld, admired, but could not imitate them.

Unhappily for me, my father was of a temper so very sedentary, that after the death of my mother, he secluded himself altogether from the world ; and taking me from school at thirteen, made me a sharer in his retirement, the first step to my undoing!

This kind of solitude, for a long time, was insufferable to me ; and having something of levity in my disposition, I became intimate with the menials of our family : their conversation grew habitual ; and what I had for some time considered as a hardship, soon wore the face of choice and inclination : I no longer repined at being debarred going abroad, or bringing company home ; nay, when accident threw me amongst people of equal, or superior rank with my own, I blush to say, their presence always made me uneasy, I looked on rational conversation as a toil ; and to repay myself for the tedious moments so passed, flew to my
father's

father's servants for relaxation and amusement. One of the females received the addresses of a young man in the neighbourhood, and his brother, through their contrivance, was introduced to me. Need I tell your ladyship, this was the hateful, detested George, at whose name I shall ever shudder.

The fellow was tolerable in his person, insinuating in his manners: I was seduced to an inexcusable weakness; and, wretch that I am, suffered him to talk to me of love without displeasure.

I said I would confess all—yes, I will confess all; but dear, dear lady, keep it from my guardian, or I am ruined.

Our household steward, the most, I may say, only honest servant my father had about him, on some pretended fault, I got discharged; and concluded my artifice, by establishing in his place the wretch I had received as my lover. After this scheme was effected, my father lived but a few days: Lord Rainsford, who came to see, and happened to be with him in his last moments, condescended to accept the office of my guardian.

This

This loss, added to the weight of my imprudence, afflicted me beyond measure. My lord consoled me in the most tender manner; promised I should find in him a parent; and in his coach carried me to the castle, before the remains of my father were interred. O, madam, how was you deceived, when me lord introduced this faulty creature to you, and you declared yourself pleased with my appearance! For a long time I beheld your ladyship with no other sentiment than a reverence that was painful, being awed, if not disgusted, by your superior virtue; and often have you chid me with the affection of a sister, for a reserve I could not conquer.

I had been under your ladyship's protection but a few weeks, when the author of my scandalous folly found means to convey to me a letter, desperately threatening his life, if I did not soon get him introduced to my lord's family. Dreading to exasperate him, by refusing to comply with his request; fatally involved, and not knowing how to retract, without laying myself open to a discovery, I resolved to speak in private to my lord, afraid to make my petition before your ladyship, not because it did not bear the appearance of innocence, but because I was conscious of guilt.

I had

I had soon an opportunity of putting my design into execution, and recommended George in so advantageous a light to the earl, as a servant my father greatly esteemed, that he had the goodness to receive him into his own particular service, in which there was then a vacancy. Unrestrained by example or instruction, I proceeded headlong to my undoing, with such rapidity, that I had actually promised to run with him to Scotland, when your ladyship discovered my wretched situation, and instead of sinking me to perdition, compassionately raised me to repentance: you sent me not where I am upbraided, despised, and avoided, as I have deserved, but where I am honoured with condescending lessons, such as the most faultless may receive as instruction. It is not Mrs. Archer's method to reprove with anger, but to advise calmly. How good, how indulgent, to send me hither! Indeed, madam, one would think your mamma's precepts were as much directed to Miss Fanny as to me; yet at such times, my naughty heart always sends its blood to my face, to tell, as it were, which of the two has most reason to apply them.

O! that, like Miss Fanny, I could hear them attentively, smiling, and without confusion! Your sister, madam, has not deceived

deceived any body; she has not debased herself, her family, and her sex: I cannot support the contrast! yet I thank heaven, I am not fatally criminal; and if this indiscretion is kindly hid from the world, I may once again lift up my down-cast eyes with pleasure; and I hope the confession I have made will be regarded as a sign of my return to prudence.

A reproof your ladyship once gave a little child in my presence, strikes me at this moment: I think I can repeat the very words, and nothing shall ever blot them from my memory. Leading her to the orange grove, just as she had committed a fault, the commission of which she continued to deny, your ladyship said, with the most enchanting mildness, Observe this tree, Sally, then tell me if the blossom comes before the fruit, 'or the fruit before the blossom? The child answered judiciously, and her mistress continued, Remember then, my dear, the inference you are to draw from this observation; when you have been a naughty girl, and are sorry for your fault, you will resemble this fair tree; your confession of that fault will be the blossom, your amendment the fruit. Ah, madam, I think I can answer for my heart, that it shall not put forth the blossom, without producing the fruit also.

Dear,

Dear, dear lady, continue to me your goodness, and lady Emma, I am sure, will not betray me. If I durst offer one more request, this I would kneel to obtain, that by a single line from your honoured hand, I may be told (if my future behaviour merits that forgiveness) you pity and forgive the wretch you have saved from destruction.

LETTER

LETTER V.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

NANCY, I am now convinced, is quite safe, and her conduct undiscovered. Since our closest conversation, my lord has often mentioned her name without any degree of that emotion which then terrified me, both for her and for myself: not for the universe would I again be guilty of concealment.

Every day my happiness augments, though I have long thought it incapable of addition. Why did I ever suspect my Rainsford of unkindness.

You cannot imagine, madam, how much I have involuntarily (as I may say) obliged this most amiable of men! When I have related the circumstances, you will know it was my own satisfaction I consulted.

Lord and Lady Gage, who yesterday did us the honour of a visit, proposed a month's

month's tour to Southampton, and presingly invited us to be of their party. My lord was not present when this scheme was first mentioned: Sir Edward embraced it with pleasure; Lady Emma was charmed with it; and for my part, having no objection, I pretended none; and we enjoyed a thousand pleasures in imagination, which in our little excursion we hoped to realize. On the Earl's entrance, he was acquainted with our intended ramble, no one doubting but he would enter into it with alacrity; but how were we all mortified, when he declared indispensable business would prevent him from attending us, yet insisted that I should keep my engagement, with an earnestness which disconcerted me. I knew his design was to give me pleasure; but did he think I could enjoy any from so long, so unnecessary a separation? if this was his real opinion, he yet knows but little of the heart he governs. Solicitations from every quarter called for all my resolution to resist; and it was not but with extreme difficulty that I got myself excused.

Notwithstanding my lord was so exceedingly pressing for me to go, yet we were no sooner alone, than he told me I had made him perfectly happy, by my preference of his company to the Southampton party.

Had

Had I really sacrificed my dearest inclination, such expressions would have richly overpaid me; instead of which, I know nothing that would have made me more uneasy than to have gone without him.

Lady Emma, and her amiable consort, ever happy, ever making happy, set out this morning for the seat of lord Gage, from whence, in two days, they proceed to Southampton. My lord and I, in their absence, shall be almost counting every hour 'till the return of those vernal joy-inspiring months we annually pass at Row-park. Lady Emma promises to be of our party; she reveres my mother, she loves my sister, and feels some part of my impatience to embrace them.

Hourly I regret the dreadful accident, that excludes you from beholding that immensity of splendid and rational felicity, which here surrounds me. Though years are past since I was spectator of that soul-piercing scene, recollection revives it afresh, and I cannot reflect on that moment without the most agonizing conflicts. My smiling fortune here suffers interruption, or how swift would have been its progress! how complete its favours!

I take

I take the liberty of inclosing a few lines to Miss Saxby, but without name or superscription, lest through carelessness or accident, it might fall into other hands: She implores this mark of my forgiveness so pathetically, that I am not able to refuse it; but, my dearest mother, it depends entirely on your better judgment to deliver or suppress my billet.

The Countess to Miss SAXBY.

Yes, I can forgive your indiscretion! I can pity what you feel from that indiscretion! Conceal nothing from our best friend; follow her unerring counsel, and I may be able one day to say, without a blush, you are dear to me. Remember I disclaim you for ever, and will no longer observe to my lord the dangerous secrecy in which I am engaged, if I once find you in the least derogating from those hopes I have entertained of you. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

SIR EDWARD ONSLOW to Colonel ONSLOW.

DESCRIBE the family you are with; lord Rainsford, lady Rainsford, lady Emma; their persons, their dispositions, their castle, their gardens, their loves. Prithee Charles, didst thou fancy thyself giving the word of command in a military way; to the right: to the left; ground your arms; recover your arms; present; fire? Hey day! and dost thou expect the same obedience from thy friend as from thy soldiers? What a catalogue of questions! Certainly my sister had some hand in them; should she frown at the imputation, tell her, moderate curiosity is not more natural than becoming in the fair sex. Let the expedition with which I hasten to obey, let that tell her how very laudable I hold it, how much I honour the delicate sensibility from which I know it arises.

Venerable shade of Sidney, assist thy suppliant, lend him thy descriptive genius;
 VOL. I. C teach

teach him thy eloquence ; that he may not prophane the charms, the graces, the virtues, he wishes to immortalize !

Amazement and respect are the first effects of beholding lady Rainsford ; her conversation softens that respect which esteem commands ; her affability brightens it to joy, to love, to adoration ; joy, serene as the smile of spring ; love, pure as the unpolluted water fall ; adoration, holy as the saints ; her sight inspires you with all the generous, all the tender passions ; you feel them warmly, but you feel them divested of desire. So much for heroics, now for genuine description.

Her ladyship, for size, colopel, comes near your standard, being very little under six feet, yet no Amazon ; nothing that conveys to you any martial ideas, but all that is captivating in female softness ; all that is winning in simplicity, she possesses in a superlative degree.

Many fine girls have I seen study to appear what nature never designed them. I have seen a handsome prude affecting sprightliness ; a coquette, reservedness ; a wanton, modesty ; but heavens ! how different is affectation from nature ! how different their studied graces from these lovely,
native

native ones, that distinguish the charming countess! If, to observe a particular object, she reclines her head negligently on either side, you wish her portrait to be taken in that position: again, she turns towards you, and with a profile you would be dissatisfied. When she talks, the ear is taken captive by her wit, the heart enraptured with her voice: there is in it something of sweet harmony not to be expressed; and she can boast this attraction, that when she but speaks, her lord listens with greater transport than he could do to the finest singer in the universe warbling the airs of Handel. I wish as much could be said of every British husband.

In short, all she looks, all she says, all she does becomes her. Are these colours too faint to convey to you an idea of lady Rainsford? Would you have me enlarge on the charms of each animated feature? What can I say of them, but that they seem formed, every one in emulation of the other? Would you know in what manner she disposes the delicate brown hair with which her fine oval face is profusely ornamented? I cannot tell you; a negligence so beautiful is only to be seen in the stile of your admired Vandyke, and baffles description. Am I expected to paint minutely the lovely windows through
 C 2 which

which her mind peeps out? Impossible! I cannot speak the sparkling language of eyes bright as the blue of Heaven.

Lady Emma, withdraw your sweet image one moment; I have not yet done with your angelic sister.

Angelic! truly angelic, is the soul of our all accomplished countess; generous, enlarged sympathetic: her pleasures are to regulate her passions, to set the brightest examples of prudence, of œconomy, of conjugal affection; and her only pain arises from a want of power to relieve those distresses which are above the reach of fortune. Never were the first vestals more cautious to preserve the sacred fire, than is lady Rainsford to make her actions shine with virtue, piety, and all that constitutes perfection. Let me perish, if I can think or speak of her but as of a divinity. In my next, I will introduce to you a woman, a lively, lovely, love-inspiring woman. Adieu.

LETTER VII.

To the SAME.

SINCE my last, I have been cruelly disappointed in the most agreeable tour to Southampton, by the sudden indisposition of lady Gage, who was to have been of our party, together with her lord. I am just returned from that nobleman's seat, whither I yesterday attended lady Emma; and am graciously inclined to proceed with the task you have assigned me. Fortune is often propitious where it is least expected: greatly has she shewn herself in your favour by sending me back to Rainsford castle with so little ceremony. A whole month's credit to your curiosity; what struggles in that time it might have suffered! However, no fear, I believe of its expiring.

Though I am strangely impatient to bring you acquainted with lady Emma, many reasons force me to give the precedence to her brother. I intend her ladyship no disrespect. You will believe me,

when I give you an opportunity of kissing her fair hands, an honour I seldom aspire to; but for you, who are happily independent of greater favours, I hope I may procure that indulgence. At this moment the image of your good woman rises to my imagination in all her domestic loveliness, and seems to chide my levity. Back, back, dear sister, back to my heart, where you shall be warmly entertained, and assured of the second, if not the first place in it.

After all, Charles, the life of a bachelor is but barely tolerable. Faith, to confess the truth, I am tired of its insipidity, and shall not be easy 'till I get clear of the awkward situation.

A first love is the devil; disappointed in that, and the consequence is a diffidence, a distrust, hardly to be conquered. I have a susceptible, but a doubting heart. Yes, I own I have susceptibility: I cannot gaze on beauty with indifference, be inanimate to the charms of wit, or give the same cool praises to a fine sentiment, ushered through a smiling, dimpled mouth, that I should do if it came from one unadorned by the Graces. Ah, lady Anne, it is from you I have learnt caution! For your sake I dare not gaze; I dare not listen without suspicion. Think me not, my brother,

brother, so much the prey of folly, as to harbour one tender idea of that ingrate : No ! I forget even that she was lovely ! I remember only, that she has deceived me ! that she is unworthy the attachment of a man of honour.

Lord Rainsford received a first impression from his countess ; how happy the event ! You bid me relate the rise and progress of their loves : you have heard there are in them many strange and unexpected turns : you are not misinformed.

When my lord's acquaintance commenced with Miss Archer, I was abroad ; but being honoured with his lordship's unbounded confidence, he conveyed to me the particulars by letter. He writes with all the exactness of a lover : on every word, on every look of his mistress, he dwells with rapture. I write not with the pen of love, but friendship ; wonder not, therefore, if I am less circumstantial.

My narrative shall be given you in a style perfectly laconic ; but first permit me to set before you the natural and acquired qualifications of my story's hero.

It would be highly absurd for one man to describe the features of another, which

makes me wish my pen in the hand of some female not insensibly stupid, who might talk of eyes, mouth, teeth, hair, without erring against propriety; but wanting such an assistant, I hasten to those great qualities, in a repetition of which I want no aid: few can know them better; none have a higher veneration for them.

Born with an amazing genius for the nobler arts, the world cannot produce a more complete master. This superiority does not show itself ostentatiously, and on all occasions, but appears, at proper seasons, through a becoming veil of diffidence, under which it is hid from vulgar eyes. His nature is frank, generous, unsuspecting: with the grave he is serious; with the gay he is lively; to his friend he is unreserved; to his inferior condescending: there is not that person to whom he does not accommodate his humour; those only excepted, whose conversation is beneath the dignity of a wise or virtuous man.

Not entirely to disregard the many personal advantages of which he is possessed, I must inform you, his stature is majestic, his person finely proportioned, his physiognomy pleasing; his address not studied, but commanding; not indolent, but easy; not bold, but graceful: to music he is quite

quite a devotee, a very Orpheus; for though nature has denied him the voice of a Manzoli, his judgment has in it whatever is most sweet and passionate in harmony; besides which, he designs, he draws, he paints, and dances to perfection.

Such is lord Rainsford; such the man who, in giving me the title of his friend, exalts me to an envied height of honour.

Farewell, my amiable sister; farewell, my martial brother. With the early dawn, expect me again on duty.

C.5

LETTER

LETTER VIII

To the SAME.

DEDICATED to the loves of lord
and lady Rainsford, less unfortunate,
though not less constant, than Pyramus
and Thisbe.

The honourable Mrs. Archer being left
with two daughters, brought the eldest
to town in the third year of her widow-
hood.

Great God! I shiver like a coward be-
fore battle! my head swims! my ideas are
totally confounded! I would write on,
but cannot.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

PANDORA has certainly opened her box of evils in this neighbourhood. I told you, madam, in my last, that lady Emma Chelsea and Sir Edward Onslow had left us, and were gone to pass a day or two at Gage-Grove, from whence they were to proceed to Southampton; but an unfortunate accident returned them to us quite unexpectedly; it was the sudden and severe illness of lady Gage, who, just as the party was setting out on their expedition, fainted by the coach side, and continued so much indisposed, that all thoughts of it were laid aside. Lady Emma and Sir Edward came back to us last evening; and about three hours since, the latter was seized with violent symptoms of immediate death; but, thanks to the great skill of Dr. Coverly, seems now much recovered.

Certainly it was a particular act of providence for his preservation, that a servant, unordered,

unordered, went to his chamber, where he had been writing, and was fallen against the desk in a senseless and deplorable situation. I was just then passing by the door, which happened to be open; and hearing the servant cry out, I stepped forward, and saw him striving to lift his master from the floor. Guess, madam, how exceedingly I was alarmed? I felt for my salts, but had them not about me; and was running back to my room for them, when I met my lord. I told him the occasion of my concern, and never was a more severe shock than what he suffered! I wept to see his distress; never brother loved another as he does Sir Edward! God forbid death should step in to dissolve a friendship so sincere and tender! My lord and I had yesterday another conversation, of which Miss Saxby was the subject. I fancy he wishes an union between her and Sir Edward. She has a fine fortune, and he, I suppose, believes her amiable; but this cannot, must not, be. I'll tell you, madam, why I imagine he leans to such a connection.

About an hour before the return of our friends from Gage-Grove, we strolled to meet them down the avenue, talking of the accident by which their Southampton scheme had been frustrated, my lord, in
that

that harmony of spirits which never fails to exhilarate mine to a degree of extacy. Never were the first pair more happy when straying in the flowery walks of Eden, than your Margarett, and her Rainsford, in this sweet excursion, I was leaning on his arm, and catching every word that dropped from his lips with fond attention, when stopping of a sudden, he clasped me to him with an air that at once both charmed and surprized me: Ha, dearest life, said he, gazing on my face with the most passionate eagerness, does Miss Saxby love, privately love Sir Edward Onslow? Say she does; say only you believe she does; and——there he stopped. I immediately saw his wish; I saw too, that it never could be effected without doing Sir Edward an irreparable injury: I knew not what to answer, I think I was never more confounded; but after a moment's silence, I said, forcing a smile, Surely my dear lord can have no serious intention, when he bids me tell him my sentiments of his ward's affections; Do you mean to resign your trust to Sir Edward?

He seemed discomposed at the jesting manner in which I spoke; and said, a little angrily, If I meant it, I fancy I should meet with some obstruction from your lady.

ladyship. Pardon, my dear lord, returned I; far be it from me to obstruct any of your views; gladly would I assist them; but indeed I believe the pair you would wish to unite, are totally indifferent to each other. He said no more, and, I hope, has dropped all thoughts of the affair.

Lady Emma has been much affected by Sir Edward's illness. I might think her concern like my own, if she did not take visible pains to conceal it. Her ladyship sends to invite me to a turn in the garden. Now, if she is not very sly, I shall discover whether I have any skill in silent language. The same delicacy that forbids the tongue, cannot always restrain the eyes from speaking, I am much mistaken, if my sister's have not, within these four hours, been whispering of her heart's concern.

I shall never again plume myself on having acquired an art in which I am no adept. Lady Emma, in our last *tête à tête*, has convinced me that my talent is not penetration. So smiling, so alert, so unconcerned, it is impossible she can feel very acutely for Sir Edward; yet is he not better! Did he not rest well last night? Does he not talk of getting up this morning?

And

And may not her ladyship's spirits be restored with his health?

Lady Gage too is much recovered. Dr. Coverly, who attends her ladyship, has accounted for the indisposition of both his patients, by the operation of some poisonous herb which they must have eat amongst other vegetables. Had I not a great opinion of this gentleman's judgment, I should think their disorder contagious, and that my lord had not escaped infection. Ever since Sir Edward's seizure, he has been excessively dejected; and when I told him yesterday, that his friend was pronounced out of danger by his physician, he looked as if he thought the hope too flattering; he looked at me as though he was still doubtful; and said, with a smile which had in it less of joy than sorrow, I wish not Margareta to interrupt your sensations of pleasure by my suspicion. This backwardness to believe what we most wish, shews how difficult it is to elate the mind which has been once thoroughly depressed.

Was not Sir Edward so very amiable, I protest I should be uneasy at the swift progress he hourly makes in my lord's affection; even his sleeping thoughts are full

full of his friend. I was but last night, that, starting from his pillow, terrified, I suppose, by what had passed in the day, he cried out, O! Onslow, Onslow, you have stabbed me!

Adieu, my revered mother; adieu, my beloved sister; I hear the earl coming to my apartment. Adieu, I salute you with glowing wishes.

LETTER

LETTER X.

To the SAME.

CRUEL, cruel husband! O! Rainford, why have I ever known thee by that fond title! I rave! I weep! I know not what I write! Oh, my mother, open your indulgent arms to receive me! No longer shall you preserve my letters! no longer shall you delight in them! Burn, tear, destroy, whatever comes from the wretched wretch your daughter!

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Colonel ONSLOW.

FAITH, Charles, three days since, thou hadst an excellent chance of succeeding me in my hereditary honours; but thanks to a good physician, and a better constitution, no such preferment now courts your acceptance. In plain English; I have been violently ill, but, like other violent things, the force of my disorder was soon spent. I expect your congratulations on my recovery; from your heart they will be sincere. I would not venture to say so much for every younger brother. No flattery, Charles; thou art too honest to blush at being possessed of these virtues, the want of which ought only to make a man ashamed.

The countess is indisposed, and confined to her chamber. Lady Emma tells me her disorder is a cold, which greatly affects her head and eyes. The earl never leaves her; lady Emma but seldom: I mope about like one forsaken: I fly to my pen,
as

as a resource against the spleen; and supposing you at leisure to attend, as I am to relate, shall continue the recital which, in my last, I was obliged to break off abruptly.

At the time Mrs. Archer brought her daughter to town, the old earl, who had buried his countess some years before, resided with lord Gore and lady Emma Chelsea in St. James's Place.

Though past the grand climacteric, love was his predominant passion; and this ridiculous humour for gallantry made his children extremely uneasy, himself the object of derision. Besides the follies of youth there also remained in his mind a tincture of those vices, to which at that season he had been most addicted; and it so happened, the first evening Miss Archer appeared at Ranelagh, his lordship had escorted thither some ladies of easy virtue, (lord Gore and lady Emma being on a party in the country) the graceful figure and engaging loveliness of Mrs. Archer commanded admiration. Lord Rainsford, like a second Sidrophel, pierc'd through his glass at this star of beauty; he drops his former associates, and becomes her shadow. When she walks, he is in motion; when she goes to a box, he plants himself before it; he folds

folds his arms, he signs, he ogles, and affects all the grimace of real or pretended passion.

Jack Piggot gave me these and also other particulars, which I am about further to relate of this memorable evening. You are not unacquainted with Jack's talent for ridicule; and I fancy it was in seeking after food to feed that humour, that he happened to be so nice an observer of the old peer.

The night being pretty far advanced, Mrs. and Miss Archer retire to one of the outer rooms; my lord follows them, and Piggot follows my lord.

Whilst the ladies waited 'till their carriage came up, the younger, out of that excess of modesty which shrinks at being too nearly observed, drew over her face a hood composed of black lace; setting off to exquisite advantage the delicacy of her complexion. Jack, when he mentioned this circumstance, told me, he looked on those kind of hoods to be a pretty piece of mechanism, invented by some artful beauty, to let her eyes play bo-peep at greater liberty, than in modesty they could do without this cobweb veil for an apology; yet, added he, let me perish if I think Miss Archer

Archer wore it from any other motive, than to avoid the thousand glances that her charms attracted; every motion, every look, continued he, was so full of sweet bashfulness, that when she went to her coach, my heart gave a joyful leap, as if it had escaped from a dangerous encounter, which it could not have supported in safety many minutes longer. Return we to our story.

The father of my friend never wanted agents to transact his private amours; and soon discovered the name, rank, and character, of his charmer; which were all so favourable, that he began to entertain very serious designs of making her an offer of his hand; but then that honour was not to be purchased by a girl with only a few thousands, at a less price than her whole heart: a coronet was to be the reward, not the bribe, or her compliance: she should not even know it was a noble lover who addressed her; and to accomplish these designs, he determines to lose his title in the plain appellation of Mr. Fell-ton, 'till he had gained his mistress; proposing, the moment she confessed a passion for him, to surprize her into an ardour of gratitude, by a declaration of his high rank.

Do you not shake your sides, Charles, with laughing at the romantic schemes of this tottering, withered Oroondates? Yet he really carried them into execution; and, in the absence of his son and daughter, got introduced, under his new character, to Mrs. Archer's family.

I said he intended to surprize his charmer into an ardour of gratitude, but she did not give his lordship an opportunity. An absolute, but very polite rejection of his proposals, so much disconcerted him, that he hastily withdrew from her presence, in full possession of his important secret.

Those must know but little of heroic love, who can suppose the susceptible earl desisted at the first repulse: no; he resolved to continue the attack; but began to see, like a reasonable being that if he would possess the person, he must purchase it on her own terms, and leave her Heart out of the question.

Divested of his former romantic notions, his lordship, the next morning, returned to Mrs. Archer's house in all his glory. Nothing could be greater than the astonishment of his fair one, on being told that her lover, Mr. Fellton, was no other than the mighty, magnanimous earl of Rainsford.

Rainsford. She started, she disbelieved the evidence of her senses, and stood hesitating between surprize and confusion. Never was a scene of higher comedy. Misconstruing her emotion for that of pleasure, down at her feet dropped the most passionate of lovers, vowing he would never leave that humble posture 'till she had pronounced him happy. No, my lord, said Miss Archer, recovering from her disorder, if you refuse to rise, I must quit your presence; I cannot stay to witness a humiliation so degrading to your lordship's dignity.

Ah, divine creature! replied he, allow me then this small favour; and snatching her hand, made the happiness of touching it a timely plea for helping him from a station which, without assistance, he could not so easily have quitted.

Whilst he was explaining his motives for the strangeness of his conduct, which no doubt were all derived from love, Miss Archer listened with great affability; and when he had run himself quite out of breath in pursuing the subject, she made him this answer, neither, as my lord afterwards observed, regarding him with triumph or contempt; sweetness and modesty accompanied her words.

I feel

I feel my heart, said she, filled with respect for your lordship, and gratitude for the honour you intend me; but know, my lord, had you continued your assumed character, it would have felt the same respect, the same gratitude. What I refused to Mr. Fellton, let lord Rainsford cease to solicit. It was not the fortune or the rank of the one I disapproved: it is not to the riches or titles of the other that I can sacrifice my inclinations: whenever I give my hand, I must feel the most undivided affection, the most tender preference for him with whom I unite my destiny; and a preference of this nature I have never yet experienced.

Never, madam! interrupted my lord.

Never, returned she; nor have I entertained a higher opinion, or more respect, for any who has yet addressed me, than for your lordship.

Though, upon many occasions, extremely ridiculous, the earl wanted not sentiment where his nobler passions were touched with delicacy. He admired the steadiness of that refusal by which he was mortified. Though her indifference disappointed his hopes, her politeness flattered his vanity; and before he left her, he made one request,

request, which she gladly complied with, that of admitting the visits of lady Emma. Her ladyship and lord Gore returned in a few days from their excursion in the country, when the whimsical earl took it into his head to tell them the whole affair of his love, which they heard with the utmost concern and astonishment, but suppressed it through motives of duty; and lady Emma promised she would soon pay her personal respects to Miss Archer.

On this visit lord Gore attended his sister, burning with curiosity to see and converse with a woman so lovely, so wise, so disinterested, as his father had represented her.

If the earl, at that time of life, when desire is almost extinguished, could not behold this blaze of beauty without being scorched, what must become of my poor friend, when the charms of Miss Archer's mind and person flashed upon him?

Once begun, he could not discontinue his visits; but fearing the displeasure of his father, conducted them with privacy.

The penetrating Emma soon discovers the sentiments of her brother. Mrs Archer warns her daughter to indulge herself less in the agreeable company of lord Gore; and

the old peer begins to betray many tokens of suspicion. Matters are thus situated, when lady Emma confesses to the earl her brother's involuntary passion, and pathetically intreats he will authorize it: her petition is neither granted nor refused: he sends his daughter to lord Gore, and gives orders that they prepare to attend, whilst he makes one more effort for the heart of Miss Archer. Lady Emma dares not remonstrate; she goes to her brother, tells him what she has done, and her father's last command, beseeching him to pardon her officiousness, which was well intended, though it had not answered to her wishes. Racked with suspense, they are both under the greatest agitation, when their father sends them word the coach is ready; and on their going to attend him, he commands them, with severity of countenance, not to open their lips in opposition to his will, being determined to conquer Miss Archer, or oblige them to drop all intercourse with that obstinate beauty; that was his expression.

Lady Emma changed colour; my friend would have pleaded his cause, but was forbid; and in silence they followed him to the carriage.

Mrs.

Mrs. and Miss Archer were going out, when their noble guest arrived; and meeting them at the door, would have conducted them up stairs; but lord Rainsford stepping into an apartment below, protested he would not stir from thence if Miss Archer continued to be cruel. See here, madam, said he, taking lady Emma and lord Gore by the hand, I have brought my children to intreat you in my favour. Indeed, my dear girl, pursued his lordship, dropping their hands, and taking both her's, indeed you must be countess of Rainsford; but accept that title from my son, when I am no longer able to thank you for making us all happy.

My friend, in the letters with which he honoured me, exquisitely describes the scene: for me it is impossible to do it justice. Suppose as much joy, gratitude, and love, as a man can suppose; and imagination will present you with this glowing picture in such a light as I dare not presume to hold it.

Had not the old peer paid the debt of nature, I could have hugg'd him for this one act of goodness, which, in about twelve months, was followed by his death. Whatever time he passed, from the gaieties of London, being never quite detached from

them, he spent in his son's family, which he had made happy by giving it a most lovely and beloved mistress.

Many a bad mother have I known send into the world virtuous and accomplished children. Mrs. Archer, it seems, is not one of this number. My lord assures me, the wisdom, piety, and discretion of his countess, is hereditary. I one day took the liberty of asking his lordship the reason Mrs. Archer never came to the castle; Ah, Onslow, replied he, she is incapacitated for travel, though the greatest emergency should require it. I never touch on this subject before my wife; but now that we are alone, continued he, I shall have a melancholy pleasure in gratifying your curiosity. It was in vain that I was sorry to have asked a question which I saw it would give him pain to answer, and he proceeded.

After our marriage, we set out directly from London for Row-Park, my father and sister in a chariot; and my wife, her mother, and myself, in the earl's coach. About a mile from Mrs. Archer's house, there is a very steep hill, on the summit of which our horses took fright, and hurried down so impetuously, that immediate death seemed inevitable: one of the doors
bursting

bursting open, Mrs. Archer was thrown out, and her daughter, with a loud cry, fainted in my arms. The horses continuing in full speed, I boldly jumped from the coach, and happily brought her safe, though still senseless, to the road side. Guess the scene of complicated horror that ensued; a wife and mother both lifeless at my feet! Suffice it to tell you, Onslow, the wheels had gone over Mrs. Archer, and it was three months before we had hopes of her recovery. Though quite helpless, and a cripple, continued his lordship, there is not in the world a more entertaining companion, nor has she lost any of that chearful serenity for which she was ever distinguished.

What a woman is here, Charles! I am an idolater of venerable characters, when accompanied with chearfulness; or, to speak my sentiments clearer, when void of moroseness; for as to the humour, whether lively or serious, I hold it altogether constitutional. I feel a lover-like impatience to kiss the hands of Mrs. Archer, and have actually promised to accompany my noble friends on their next visit. Fanny Archer, I am told, is a sweet, blooming girl; handsome as an angel, and gentle as mercy. Though I want no magnet to draw me thither, the sight of this young beauty will add to the pleasure I propose at Row-Park.

LETTER XII.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

THURSDAY, madam! Heaven and
earth! next Thursday! I can no
more. Spare, O! spare 'till then the re-
petition of a blow that fells me even with
wretchedness!

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to COLONEL
ONLSOW.

EVERY heart-felt pleasure that can arise from the title of a parent, attend my dear Charles. How does the good woman in the straw? Kiss her hand for me; tell her how much I am charmed with the present she has made our family. A fine boy, you say, may he make as good a man as his father, at least not a worse than his uncle.

I accept your invitation of becoming surety for the little stranger; but as it cannot be done personally, substitute another, and tell him, he shall promise nothing that I will not faithfully perform.

In this season of cake, caudle, how d'ye's, and tittle tattle, Mrs. Onslow, consequently the colonel, cannot want amusement: but should an hour hang heavy on their hands, I dispatch a sweet girl to enliven it. Lady Emma, who comes here?

By Heaven, lady Emma herself; she invited me, as she passed the door, to drink tea in her sister's dressing-room: I obey the summons with pleasure; for three days have I not been admitted to that honour: my visit will be short; punctilio requires that it should: at my return you shall hear more of lady Emma. A message from her ladyship: well, I find it is not destined that I am to see the countess; I wish she may not be worse than is apprehended. I go to attend lady Emma in the drawing-room. In my next I will answer the remainder of your questions, beginning with a description of lady Emma, and ending with that of Rainsford castle. Farewell.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

DESPAIRING! restless! forlorn!
No glimmering of hope to guide my
steps! Which way shall I turn? whither
shall I fly from reflection? Cruel reflection,
that tells me what I once was! what I
now am! I said I would not write the
cause of my affliction; but oh! my dearest
mother, the thought of a verbal relation
distracts me! My heart would fail, my
tongue would falter, my tears would in-
terrupt it.

In fable lines, befitting the horror of my
fate, shall my distress be painted. Sadly
painful talk! Be it once over, I will try to
prepare my mind for the reception of such
pious consolation as I shall meet in the arms
of my indulgent mother.

You may remember, madam, that in
the last moment of my happiness, I broke
off abruptly, hearing my lord coming, as I

supposed, to my closet. Unagitated, my heart never freer from suspicion. I waited his appearance, my pen suspended in my fingers. With a quick step, he entered my antichamber, there stopped; I listened, I heard his groan, and ran, terrified, to know the reason. Great God! what did I there behold! my Rainsford, my yet dear Rainsford! thrown back in a chair; his eyes lifted, his hand extended to Heaven; his countenance pale as the midnight spectres, and sending forth piercing groans, as though the soul and body were suffering immediate separation.

He saw me not; I fell upon his neck; I bathed his face with my tears; I begged, I intreated him to speak, to tell me the cause of his disorder. Receiving no answer, and supposing some sudden turn had carried off Sir Edward; Ah! my lord, cried I, our friend, Sir Edward Onslow, is no more! How! said he, without changing his position, dead! is Onslow dead! Do not alarm yourself, continued I, his valuable life is, I hope in no danger; it was your agitation only that made me fear the worst. No! no! replied he, and was again silent. O heaven! my sense of what I then suffered is so recent, it seems not recollection; my tears will flow; by their torrent my sight is overpowered.

My

My lord having, for some moments, continued in agonies almost convulsive, said, pointing to my closet, Go, Margaretta; leave me; I will follow you instantly: go! go! pray go! I have something to declare, the thoughts of which have quite unhinged my soul: leave me! leave me, my lovely Margaretta. Yes, cruel, cruel husband! you called me your lovely Margaretta, to make the dreadful blow you intended the more insupportable.

At his earnest intreaties, I withdrew, flattering myself I should soon know from his own lips what had occasioned his distracting conflicts.

He did not keep me long in suspense; but as he came towards me, my palpitating heart seemed to forewarn me of what would happen in this interview. You come, my dearest lord, said I, throwing my arms about him, you come to repose your cares in the bosom of a wife who adores you; I am intitled to a share in your affliction; hide not from me, I conjure you, what it is that disturbs you.

His countenance had in it something dreadful; he sighed, he answered not; he took out his handkerchief, and turned from me. Again, I implored he would
 speak

Speak ; he attempted it, but could not. The table on which I had been writing stood before us ; he took up the pen, and wrote thus :

We part for ever.

There ! there ! it is done ! (said he) as if glad the horrid words had escaped him ; and falling back in his chair, gave me an opportunity of reading them, which I did, stupified with amazement. Again he took the pen, and wrote underneath the lines, on which my eyes were rivetted, Search not the wound that rankles in my soul. Ask not from whence proceeds my affliction. May all my woes be doubled. May my name be abhorred of men ; may it be blotted from the book of Heaven, if ever I wilfully divulge it.

Like one awakened from the sleep of death, I snatched the pen from his fingers ; abandoned to despair, cried out, Revoke ! revoke ! and fell, senseless on the floor. His cries, his strenuous embraces, and the tears he shed upon my face, recalled me to life. At that moment he did not, could not, hate me. Oh ! that, with this thought, I had expired in his arms ! It is necessary, said he, that we part : my vow is irrevocable !

cable! O! no, no, no, I never can revoke it!

Ah, madam, my misery thus confirmed, would you suppose it capable of addition? Yes, I found even that was not impossible! He threw himself at my feet; and by an agony of passion, which I had not power to withstand, exacted from me a promise not to divulge, either to his sister, or his friend, our unhappy situation; the latter of whom he mentioned with tenderness, that seemed to torture him. Oh! that his love had been half as steady as his friendship!

Is it possible he can be involved in dark, hidden crimes, the weight of which oppresses him? If an involuntary fault hangs thus heavy on his soul, why does he not suffer the gentle hand of affection, compassion and forgiveness, to lift the load from his bosom? Would he but treat me with tender, generous confidence, there may be yet hope, but that cruel, cruel vow, destroys it. My suspicions are horrid! they confound and distract me! Ah, girl, girl! born for my undoing! My lord loves thee! Yes, madam, my ungrateful lord certainly loves Miss Saxby! Witness God, I never hinted my uneasiness till now! I knew you would suspect him! By
you,

you, my dearest mother, I could not endure he should be suspected : the faults of those we love become our own, with the same caution we conceal them. It is not I, unjust Rainsford, it is thyself who has betrayed thee. Horror ! love Nancy Saxby ! Too, too sure, he loves her, or why his displeasure at my sending her from the castle ? Why his wish of uniting her to Sir Edward Onslow, but to deceive me ? Why his emotion, when he pressed to know if she loved Sir Edward, but from a motive of jealousy ? Enough ! enough ! I can doubt no longer : yet do not treat the unfortunate girl unkindly ; perhaps she is innocent, at least there is a possibility of her not being intentionally guilty. But what, alas, from a creature so young, so artful, so imprudent ! Here I stop, it would grieve me to condemn her wrongfully.

I have been excessively ill, yet the family suspects not the cause of my indisposition. My lord never leaves my room but of nights, when he retires to his own ; and carries himself with a tenderness so truly counterfeited, that lady Emma can only wonder at my melancholy, without being able to discern the reason.

His

His want of affection to me I can but too well account for : but why does he behave to his amiable sister with coldness almost bordering on contempt ? Ah, what have I to do with reflection ? it flies me effectually ; or, instead of being stupified with sorrow, I should be frantic with amazement. In the same breath that he tells me we must part, he kneels at my feet, weeps, prays, and intreats I will not leave the castle ; but I have withstood his prayers, his intreaties ; and next Thursday, my dearest, best friend, you will see before you the most disconsolate of wives, the most dutiful of children.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Colonel ONSLOW.



BY Heaven, Charles, I must fly from lady Emma. Better face the mouth of a cannon, than be daily and hourly attacked with irresistible unreserve; with sweet, innocent freedoms, against which the stoutest heart finds itself defenceless.

Hitherto I have talked with her, laughed with her, sung with her, rid with her, walked with her, nay, even danced with her; and the perfidy of lady Anne has brought me off in safety. But tell me when you have seen my enchanting Emma; tell me how much longer it is possible for me, exposed as I am, to hope for that safety.

Without being of the graceful size, she has in her person smartness, elegance, and dignity; her very features have soul in them; her characteristic is sprightliness; her eyes, her smile, her every motion, is
full

full of it. Then for innocence, (the fairest flower that can adorn a female bosom) where does it blow with such blushing, luxurious sweetness, as on the countenance of my Emma; attended with such an excess of youth, as you cannot look on without being dazzled. When she dances, you are charmed with her foot: when she permits a man the honour of drawing on her glove, he is sure to blunder, his attention being fixed by the finest hand in the universe. She has had a thousand admirers, yet affects to treat love as an idle, uneasy chimera, and, by her cruelty, is at present freed from their importunities; yet her's is the most lovely cruelty in the world; nothing in its nature savage, haughty, or uncivil; the very words that rob you of hope, come so smilingly from her lips, that to a person devoid of hearing, they would appear rather proofs of approbation than dislike; but then her resolution is built on so firm a basis, that one discouraging look from her would make a man more wretched than the most absolute repulse from any other woman.

Her wit being illuminated by discretion, the one invites, with charming familiarity, to her conversation; the other prevents the most daring of our sex from encroachment.

Equally

Equally unacquainted with defamation and concealment, she will tell you her thoughts with the most enchanting frankness; and if she sees you guilty of folly, will point it out with an art so nice and delicate, as shall neither confound or displease you.

She is a severe and true satyrist, lashing vice without personal reflections; and when she rallies, her rallery raises no emotion but pleasure.

She is full of entertaining anecdotes, but never relates a *faux pass*, without concealing the name of the party it might injure.

She loves her brother with entire affection; and is devoted to lady Rainsford with an ardour I never before met with from one woman to another.

Now, tell me, Charles; tell me, sister, shall I fly from this enchantress? or shall I continue in defiance of the danger by which I am surrounded? Some magic spell fastens me to this spot: I have played too long about the flame; my wings are singed; I cannot fly: I fear I am like that poor bird, which having lost sight of freedom, sings contentedly in a cage, finding all its
little

little struggles to leave it ineffectual. Mine, indeed, is a noble, magnificent cage; pardon me, that I have not yet described it; I think that was one of your commands. Well then, follow me, and with your mind's eye, take a view of Rainford castle.

The situation of this edifice is such as makes it difficult to determine from which of the advantages I am going to mention, it receives most embellishment.

A finely cultivated hill, that, like hospitality, extends its inviting arms on either side. A smiling valley beneath, waving with the yellow grain of plenty. A noble park on the right; an extensive plain on the left; from the willow-fringed streams, softly meandering through the meadows; from the proud river, boldly sweeping its flowing honours through the park; or from the more stately sea, swelling its huge silver sides, to claim a share in the beholder's admiration.

I say, it would be hard to determine, to which of these objects, all crowding on the sight at one view, we sacrifice our first emotions of pleasure and surprize.

The castle is so situated, that, for some miles round, it is perfectly conspicuous,
peeping

peeping out between two stately woods; one embellished with temples, grottoes, fountains, and all that is beautiful in art; the other representing nature in her primitive loveliness, thick planted, irregular, almost inaccessible.

Another interruption! A gentleman is just arrived, and enquires for me: whoever he is, I could, at this time, have dispensed with his visit; the descriptive humour is upon me. I long to lead you through an orangery, the beauty of which is unrivalled in either India. I wish to attend you up the South terrass, a mile in length, height and breadth proportioned; on one hand, all the variegated sweets of Flora; on the other, cascades falling at the distance of about two hundred yards. I would give an immensity to witness your astonishment at beholding this magnificent walk terminate in a fall of water, which tumbles down a rock sixty feet in height, and empties itself into a marble bason beneath. Many other inimitable scenes crowd upon my pen, but good manners, civility, and curiosity, call me from it.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

To the SAME.

IMAGINE my surprize and satisfaction at finding the stranger to whom I was last night summoned, no other than your brother officer, our dear and brave Robert Onslow, just arrived from a station of four years on the African coast. Difficult it would be to distinguish his complexion from that of the natives, but his mind has undergone no change; honour, humanity, and sincerity, are the same in all climates.

Sally Edgerton, the niece of our worthy friend, has, you know, long since, found the way to his heart. He was, when he called at the castle, going to obtain in form Mr. Edgerton's consent to his nuptials, on which business he was so very impatient, that it was impossible to detain him for the night: when I pressed him to it, he replied, S'life, Ned, I have had the charming Sally in tow these seven years, and am so firmly resolved to bring her speedily into the safe port of matrimony, that I would
not

not defer my visit to her uncle to be made high admiral. I saw him to the gate, from whence he scampered off, attended only by one servant, but extremely well mounted, for which, to confess the truth, I was half sorry, as he kicked and spurred the poor beast most unmercifully. He has insisted on my going to town with him, declaring, he shall not think the ceremony valid, unless he receives his bride from my hand. And must I leave this heavenly place? most certainly I must! I have promised, and cannot now disengage myself. Well, I will not punish myself with a long absence. The hours I spend from lady Emma, shall not be numerated in my calendar of time.

I expect Robert this evening. In the evening, did I say? My God! the sun has not been risen three hours, and he is here already. Farewell, I suppose I shall scarce have time to introduce him to the family, and we are gone.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

ONE day, one short day, and I bid an everlasting adieu to this dear, this fatal spot, the scene of my most ecstatic happiness, the scene of my most poignant misery. Is my lord tired of my love? or is he conscious of the wrong he does me, in giving his heart to another? Is it excess of remorse, is it a self-punishment, he would inflict? If it is, why involve in his banishment a wife who dotes on him to madness? I will go to him, I will kneel to him, I will not let him go till he has recalled his inhuman vow. O no, I will not ask him to retract; but I will fly far, far from him. To-morrow, my dear mother, I shall embrace you. I have something to disclose to you, my revered parent. Alas! my heart, my poor heart, is bursting.

LETTER

L E T T E R XVIII.

To the S A M E.

I WRITE on to the last moment of my departure, though almost assured I shall be the wretched messenger of my own woe-begotten letters.

Lady Emma thinks I leave the castle for change of air : horrid deception ! The pain I feel in parting from her, is not the least cause of my affliction. After I have left him, my lord must take upon himself to continue the deceit. I will hide my head from the world's censures : your bosom shall screen me from the poisoned darts of calumny. The hour is just at hand, when I set out for that blessed sanctuary. And can I leave my lord, without giving him one last adieu ? Yes, I will see him ; this moment I will see him : he shall find I am not the patient sufferer he thinks me. I will go and upbraid him with his infidelity.

L E T T E R

LETTER XIX.

To the SAME.

I Tremble! I am all over agitated! Such a scene! such an interview! How shall I describe it? Yet hold, reason! hold thy seat one moment, whilst I attempt the recital.

I went to seek my lord, accompanied by a full heart, swelling, as I supposed, with resentment, for the slights it had received. At every step I took towards his apartment, my resolution seemed to gather strength, and I felt something like the sensation of pleasure, when I thought I had obtained a victory over that affection, which made a separation dreadful.

With these newly acquired sentiments, I sought for the person who had given them birth, in his chamber, in his dressing-room, in his library; and at last my search ended in his closet, where he was reclin-

ing on a sofa, his face covered with a handkerchief.

I entered softly, and found my courage gradually decrease; but approaching nearer, and perceiving him fast locked in the arms of sleep, I began to recover myself a little, and gently drew from his face the veil by which it was concealed.

No language can speak my various agitations, whilst my weeping eyes were taking a last farewell of their fondest delight. No pencil can delineate my too lovely, too guilty husband.

The windows, on account of the weather's extreme heat, were thrown open; he lay extended before them, his cheek supported by his hand, glowing with so inflamed a colour, as spoke but too, too plainly, the disturbance of his soul. Part of his fine brown hair escaping from the ribbon that bound it, beautifully shaded his forehead; whilst part fell upon his graceful shoulders, and being exposed to the air, waved in the most charming disorder. His eyes, where I was wont to read the sweetest, tenderest confirmation of my happiness, had, though closed, left a free passage to the drops of sorrow, and those

those trickled down his burning cheek in great abundance.

Judge, madam, what, at this sight, became of your heroic daughter! Motionless, almost inanimate, I felt a total suppression of that false resentment, by which, a moment before, my soul had been actuated; and all my former tenderness returned.

With my handkerchief I wiped away his tears; and kneeling by him, gave unrestrained freedom to my own. One hand that lay carelessly extended by his side, I gently withdrew; and, by an emotion wholly involuntary, pressed to my lips. O! Nancy, is it you has seduced his affections? is it you, by whom he is driven from my embraces?

Awakened by my agitation, he started, he opened his eyes, he looked on me with an air so languid, as redoubled all my distress. His conflicts were equal, if not superior, to my own. I tried to speak; but sobs interrupted my words. What horror did my lord's countenance express! He wrung his hands, he struck his breast; then starting from the couch, raised me from the ground, and clasped me to his bosom, with a fervency that revived my

hopes; but, good heaven! what became of them, of me, when he said, still holding me to him; that I still love you, Margareta; that I still adore you, God is my witness! The same omnipotent Power is also witness to my resolution, that I must, that I am resolved to tear myself from you!

Never! never! I strove to say; but already had he torn himself from my arms! Already was he flown from me!

LETTER

LETTER XX.

To the SAME.

PERUSE, madam, the inclosed ;
 then tell me, if cruel fortune can yet
 have any additional blow in reserve for
 me ? Tell me, if she has not severely can-
 celled, great as they were, her former fa-
 vours ?

E 3 LETTER

LETTER XXI.

Lord RAINSFORD to Lady RAINSFORD,
inclosed in the preceding.

I CONJURE, I intreat, I command ;
forgive that expression ; but by all your
duty, I command ; by our earliest loves,
I intreat ; by the preservation of my life,
I conjure you not to leave the castle.

For the universe, I would not see you
again, most lovely of women ! Avoid me ;
for your own sake, avoid me. Lady Em-
ma is attached to you ; Heaven ! how
warmly ! I could say more ; but you best
can tell how entirely she is devoted to you.
Sir Edward Onslow, to him too ! Yes, to
both you may now discover, that we are
parted, never to meet again.

Perhaps, should he guess from what
motive I inflict on myself banishment from
all I hold most dear and valuable, he might
condemn, he might expect from me a
conduct different from what I am pursu-
ing ! Perhaps he might ! Perhaps, too,
my

my own opinion coincides with his! I am hurried on by a strange impulse which, as a husband, I ought to, but as a man, I cannot conquer! It is this impulse that drives me from you a voluntary exile! Solitary retirement is my choice. The world I leave to you, Sir Edward, to my sister. Ah, Margaretta, will not their presence compensate for my absence?

Support, I charge you, the dignity of your rank. You are still countess of Rainsford, and mistress of my fortune, nay, of my existence.

Your mother is the best of women. Alas, were all like her, I never had been unhappy! Yet you must not go to reside with that excellent parent; no, Margaretta, never, never shall you leave the castle. I regret Mrs. Archer cannot come to you. I repeat, you must not go to her. Our separation will alarm the world. A thousand conjectures will be formed; a thousand whispers circulated. I desire to appear the only guilty person; and leaving you in possession of all I can bestow, will speak your innocence louder than Truth herself could speak it.

Let Emma and Sir Edward console you, and disturb not your repose with one thought of Rainsford.

LETTER XXII.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

SO, absolutely forbid from throwing myself at your revered feet, yet longing for that satisfaction, the only one I am now capable of tasting. What method is left me to preserve that duty I promised at the altar, and not sacrifice my inclinations, glowing with filial love? Hasten, madam, to tell me, if an expedient can be found to preserve both, or if one must be forfeited, command me which I shall relinquish?

My lord says, if all women had been like you, he had never been unhappy. Tell me, my dear mother, what he means by this dark insinuation? Alas! Miss Saxby, I fear your idea drew it from his pen! I can no more.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXIII.

The Honourable Mrs. ARCHER to MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford.

COMFORT yourself, my beloved, my amiable child; you have yet ample room for consolation; it is a mother's voice bids you be comforted; it is a mother's hand that leads you to a spring, from whence your soul shall suck in the unsullied waters of refreshment. Why has not my child, in all her affliction, discovered this sweet resource? Shall I say from what obstruction she has missed it? Sudden and extreme sorrow has this unhappy effect, that it throws a kind of foggy gloom over the senses, which prevents the eye of reason from looking abroad, and bringing in occasions of contentment. I have shewn the cloud; suffer me now to dispel it.

Misfortune has not invaded you, through any unguarded part of your conduct; no, the tyrants attacks have been so severe against you, at the command of a Power irresistible! a wise and merciful God! who,

when he sees fit, will turn all those trials to the glory and advantage of my child.

What a heavenly companion is self-approbation ! How many who have all your disappointments to struggle with, are denied its cheering serenity, whilst you are rich in its possession ! Do not these reflections relieve, enlighten, sustain you ? Oh ! my daughter ! whether your trials are of short or long duration, despond not, say not you are forsaken of Providence.

When I pray, it is for my child. When I exult, it is in my child. But when I weep, it is for her lord. Yes, the tears I shed for my innocent Margareta, are few, in comparison to those I give the now guilty, once amiable, Rainsford.

Fanny, poor girl, forgets her usual extravagant fondness for your lord ; she shudders at his name ; she calls him savage, and thinks of him with abhorrence. Her tears accompany mine, but flow not from the same cause ; devoted to her injured sister, she has not one to bestow on fallen virtue.

Through all the intricacy of your lord's reverse of humour, I have followed with an inquisitive eye ; and observe such contrarieties

trarieties, as carry me above amazement, and confound my understanding.

Jealousy, of all destructive passions, is that which makes the greatest ravage in the human breast. A never-dying spark, that, by degrees almost imperceptible, insinuates itself into bosoms unsuspecting as your own: piety, sense, prudence, are no barriers to its entrance: its very heat is destructive; but if it rages, the nobler passions are often consumed in the fatal flame.

Guard your heart, my best love, against so subtle an enemy; and though you have reason to suspect your lord's fidelity, do not too hastily conclude Miss Saxby to be the object of that infidelity. I hope, nay, I believe, she is innocent: her behaviour is so prudent, so discreet, so ingenuous: the cloud that hung upon her brow is dispersed: she seems reserved, but her reserve is attended by such a becoming cheerfulness, as, in my opinion, cannot conceal guilt of so black a nature.

Your sister, last night, threw herself at my feet, for permission to attend you at the castle; it pained me to refuse her, yet many reasons obliged me to it.

Your

Your lord's commands must be complied with ; though, was I only to obey the dictates of maternal impatience, I should not hesitate, but bid you fly to arms joyfully opened to receive their treasure. God bless, comfort and support, my dearest, dear child.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Lady EMMA
CHELSEA.

ABSENTED! Lord Rainsford absented! from his countess! from his sister! from his friends, without a reason, without endeavouring to assign any! Heaven and earth! Pardon, madam, if, for the first time, I wish you less perfect, than nature has designed you! if I wish you subject, at least, to credulity, that in this one instance you might have been deceived. Was I monarch of the universe, freely would I abdicate my throne, only to doubt the truth of this intelligence. I cannot doubt it; it comes from the pen of lady Emma Chelsea!

Married three years! In all that time, no coldness, no diminution of tenderness! and now so unaccountably, so suddenly changed! Who would have thought this of lord Rainsford? Forgive me, madam, he is not more your brother than the friend of Onslow, dear to him as his own soul; yet

yet I must repeat, Who would have thought this of lord Rainsford ?

Had so unhappy a turn happened in any other family, it might have been accounted for by jealousy, or perhaps a guilty attachment to some new object ; neither of these causes can be thought of here ; there is not in the world a man freer from suspicion than the earl ; virtuous himself, he idolizes the virtues of his countess. Was he given to change, that I must have discovered in my long acquaintance with him. I know him the reverse, steady and sincere : I know too, he thinks your sister, of all women on earth, the most lovely ; and, of all women I know, she is most beloved by him.

Astonishment ! to leave them, as I imagined, in perfect felicity, and hardly three days in town, before I hear they are reduced to as perfect misery ! Fain would I persuade myself, my senses are wrapped in sleep, overpowered with wine, or even more fatally disordered, rather than know that my friend is unhappy, that he has involved the most deserving of their sex in his unhappiness.

Twenty-five years I have already passed ; I have been disappointed, afflicted, have
tasted

tasted many vicissitudes of pain and pleasure; but never encountered so severe a blow as reached me this morning, when I had the honour of receiving your ladyship's commands.

Dearest lady Emma, continue to bless me with your charming confidence, the only satisfaction I can possibly taste till I see the peace of your family restored, till I have been in some degree instrumental to its restoration.

Your ladyship was exceedingly fortunate in discovering the retreat of your brother; how much more so, in the expedient of engaging Cusack to give private intelligence of his lord's motions, a precaution most likely to take the cloak of obscurity from his actions.

The countess flatters my ambition, in supposing I have so great a share of influence over the mind of her lord. If a long and steady friendship entitles me to any, by Heaven, it shall now be warmly exerted.

Family affairs, business indispensable, prevents my setting out immediately for Buckman Chace; the moment I am at liberty, I fly thither; before that time, my
letters

letters shall reach him ; something may be gathered from his answers. Depend upon it, madam, any intelligence I receive shall be directly forwarded to the castle.

Ambitious you must think me, yet condemn not my presumption ; call me not a bold man, when I request, that by your ladyship's pen, your and the countess's commands might be conveyed to the honoured

ONSLow.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

The Honourable Mrs. ARCHER to MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford.

VILE! vile girl! incredulous woman! Alas, how severely is thy incredulity banished!

Before my endeavours, united those of my gentle, compassionate Fanny, raised her from dejection, incessantly did she weep. Hypocrite! abominable hypocrite! Who, like me, might not have been deceived? Her fault was virtue itself, compared with the dreadful crime, of which I can no longer doubt her guilty; yet that fault she never ceased lamenting. Who could have suspected the sincerity of her remorse? Never did I witness so much seeming contrition!

Never will I again suppose, when a young creature debases herself like Nancy Saxby, that she can ever rise perfectly clean from the mire in which she has wallowed!

Your

Your abandoned, ungrateful lord, is no longer, my dear love, worthy of those tears you daily, hourly, shed for him. A man who can so basely desert you, and for such a wretch! such a despicable wretch! deserves no pity, much less the smallest degree of tenderness from my sweet, my inestimable daughter.

Yes, my dear child, your suspicions are too fatally realized! Nancy Saxby is absolutely gone to the worst of men! Why have I been so foolishly blinded? Never more let me believe in the reformation of the most specious penitent. What have I said! O God, forgive this petulance! Shouldst thou, for the offences of one incorrigible sinner, reject the prayers of a thousand contrite hearts, where would be thy justice, thy mercy, thy loving-kindness? And shall I, the most unworthy of thy creatures, presume to judge the sincerity of those hearts, which, perhaps, Thou, who seest all their thoughts, receivest, and pardonest!

Fanny was the first to inform me of the shocking girl's elopement, intending, dear, considerate child, to break to me the horrid tidings by degrees; but her face was overspread with an air of such mingled grief and astonishment, as gave me an immediate alarm; and my inquiries after the
cause

cause were too sudden and too eager for evasion. My sister! ah, my poor sister! sinking down on the side of my bed, tears streaming from her mild eyes. What, madam, will become of the countess? Her cruel lord is perfidious! Here she was silent; then taking a note from her bosom, which Miss Saxby, in her hurry had left upon her toilet; Read this, my dear mother, continued she, the wretch is gone to him! Read this, and account for his brutality to my sister!

I have debated, my dear Margareta; long have I debated with myself, if I should give you this relation. At first I was of opinion, it would only augment your affliction, and was prompted to suppress it. Again, I considered, that every instance you now receive of his guilt, would strengthen your resolution to despise, perhaps forget the author of your wrongs. These thoughts determined me to conceal nothing from you; and, to assist in a conquest that may be attended with some difficulty, I send his billet, which the partaker of his crimes left upon her table; though wrote with evident haste and emotion, every letter, every stroke speaks too plainly the hand by which you are dishonoured. Read it at this place.

“ Dearest

“ Dearest creature, our separation is at
 “ an end. This day I have taken leave
 “ of the castle. Artifice will still be ne-
 “ cessary. Every thing is properly con-
 “ certed. To-morrow I shall receive you
 “ to my arms, with all the impatience, all
 “ the ardour of a man entirely devoted to
 “ you. Be at the gate, my charming girl,
 “ to-morrow morning at seven.”

Observe you, my dear child, your ruined
 lord says, artifice will be still necessary.
 Does he not herein confess, that all his
 late assumed tenderness for, all his conflicts
 at, parting with you, all the proofs he
 has given of disinterestedness, by leaving
 you mistress of his house and fortune ; has
 he not, I say, declared, these are all the
 produce of mean, designing art ? To what
 lengths is he pursuing that art ! Has he
 not taken for the companion of his flight,
 the faithful, the deserving Cusack, whose
 principles of honour are so firmly esta-
 blished, that I know he would suffer death
 rather than be aiding to the infamy of his
 lord ? And why has he drawn this good
 man after him, but as a screen to his
 vices ? No, he will not bring his mistress
 home ; he will place her at some distance,
 and make his visits in privacy.

In the awful name of Virtue, there is something so dignifying, so much to the honour of its possessor, that the most vicious will submit to wear the bare cloak of hypocrisy to attain it. No wonder that lord Rainsford, who was believed the very offspring of virtue, who received all its reward of praises and admiration, should try to preserve its appearance, to deceive you, his friends and the world, by continuing to affect the same discontent with which he has withdrawn from them.

You tell me he has retired to Buckman Chace, once the scene of his innocent amusements, now converted to the purpose of his guilty pleasures.

How do I call to mind the description you once gave me of that rural seat! I think you said it was forty miles from the castle: you spoke too in raptures of its sequestered situation. I thought of it then with delight. I think of it now with abhorrence.

Cruel lord! Why have you forfeited the large share you held in my fond affection? On you, my dearest daughter, it shall now devolve; on you, who, at a too high price, have purchased the addition of parental love, due to the best of children from the tenderest of mothers.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXVI.

Lady EMMA CHLELSEA to Sir EDWARD
ONSLow.

NEITHER bold nor presumptuous is that friend who can so warmly interest himself in the unhappy situation of our family. Believe me, Sir Edward, I receive your request with that gratitude your services demand. I yield to it with a steadiness due to your peculiar merit, and am commanded by the countess to be particular in whatever happens at the castle.

Apologize not for your surprize at the earl's conduct; it has filled even me with indignation! Never more will I call him brother! Would to God my dear, injured sister, could blot his idea from her memory. I cannot see devouring grief prey upon her lovely cheek, without the most violent resentment, which all her gentleness, all her forgiving sweetness, serves but to increase. She chides me when I speak freely of him; she says, Consider, my dear
Emma,

Emma, he is your brother! he is my husband! let us not think too hardly of one, in whom we have so often gloried. Noble, generous creature! I am silenced by her rebuke! I gaze on her with admiration: my sighs, my tears, say how much I am affected.

I cannot look back on what you, or what my Rainsford has been, without dying away at the thought of what he now is!

Good God! out of what fluctuating matter does Providence form the dispositions of its creatures! One day virtuous, another depraved; this hour happy, the following, miserable; now laughing, now weeping; one moment serene and unsuspecting, the next, discomposed, and the prey of suspicion!

I think it would be an addition to our misfortunes, were they made public. Nothing has yet transpired. The ingrate has flown to a place, where he often retires to enjoy those innocent amusements, for which he must have now lost all relish. Yet I do not expect the Argus eyes of a scrutinizing world will be always closed, or that fame will forget her office.

I am

I am summoned to lady Rainsford ; she begs I will come to her immediately. Is it possible any thing can have happened to increase her sufferings? Nothing, I greatly fear, will ever alleviate them.

Heaven and earth! for whom do you think the lovely, discreet, accomplished, countess, is forsaken? Why, for Nancy Saxby! Yes, Nancy Saxby, his ward! the awkward, wretched, uneducated, Nancy Saxby; that same lowering, down-looking girl, you once said you would not call your wife, your daughter, or your sister, for the universe: yes, her! O Rainsford! Rainsford! now indeed art thou fallen! I can say no more on the hateful subject. Mrs. Archer's letter, which I am permitted to inclose, will speak too much!

Have you read it, Sir Edward? Has not your compassionate heart bled? Have not your eyes streamed at the contents? Blessed Mrs. Archer! Angelic woman! do not despise me for the sake of one I cannot now think on without horror!

Man! insinuating, designing, fickle, man! Pardon me, Sir Edward, I am going to be severe! But is it not true? Ah! have we not a too recent example, that man is insinuating, designing, fickle? In early acquaintance,

quaintance, assiduous, officious, full of respect; possessed of what he has once pursued with ardour, what succeeds? Ah, God! cannot lady Rainsford inform you.

Perhaps my pen might take too great a licence, was I to indulge my present humour: I will no longer indulge it; such subjects cannot affect Sir Edward Onslow, but may be ungrateful to him.

When you write to the infatuated criminal, be on on your guard, or he will be too much so on his, for us to make that ample discovery of his guilt after which I am now seeking. Do not hint to him the least of our suspicions, nor mention the detested name of Saxby.

The countess bids me assure Sir Edward Onslow, she is full of gratitude, and that he is intitled to her warmest acknowledgments. I join in them with sincerity.

LETTER XXVII.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Colonel ONSLOW,

A Moment later, my brother, and your application would have been fruitless; but, as it happens, I hope to congratulate you on its success before I close my letter.

Having received your commands, I posted away to the secretary of war, with as much expedition as if the visit had been designed to my mistress. Hardly had I preferred my petition to his lordship, and stated matters in their true colours, when in came the duke of ———, in his nightgown and slippers, to solicit the same favour for lord John, his grace's second son, not three months since preferred to a company in the guards; a stripling who has never seen an engagement, except at the play-house, or a tavern.

From the father of this young hopeful I had a slight inclination of the head, as he passed into another apartment, to which he

He was attended by the secretary, who had not yet either granted or refused my petition.

My expectations were suspended between hope and fear, though leaning considerably to the latter, when I overheard my lord apologizing to his grace, and assuring him, the regiment was promised; on which the noble solicitor withdrew, leaving behind him a certain complacency of fiz with which he entered, a mask that great men are ever prone to wear on such occasions.

When I saw his grace sent away dissatisfied, you may suppose I lost all thoughts of succeeding; and I said, as the secretary returned from attending him to the door, Well, my lord, I have, I can have no hopes for my brother: your lordship's answer to the duke I have heard, and——

It is true, replied our worthy friend, interrupting me, I did tell his grace, the regiment in which your brother is lieutenant colonel, was promised; it was enough that I knew the merit of that gentleman to determine me it should be his. The nation, continued he, is not indebted to lord John; to Mr. Onslow it owes many and singular services. This excess of justice,

tice, generosity, and politeness, binds me to him eternally. He is now actually waiting on the king for his majesty's approbation.

A message from his lordship; he desires to see me immediately: I obey the summons, and hope, at my return, to confirm your promotion.

Well, Charles, I not only wish you joy of succeeding, but have the pleasure of dispatching these agreeable tidings in the packet that carries the royal mandate for your return to England.

Miss Edgerton is inclinable to defer her nuptials 'till your arrival; but Robert is so impatient to command, at least to be second in command, that I believe we must get her to sign his commission, without your being a witness.

Colonel R——'s regiment is ordered to relieve you with all possible expedition: prepare therefore for your embarkation; you can have no friend who will receive you and your fair fellow traveller, on the British shore, with greater joy, than Onslow.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

YES, madam! I now see my unhappiness in a point of view that wants no additional light to render every object perfect. I struggle with sentiments, sad, passionate, disordered! Forgive, forgive, this confession of my weakness! What a friend, what a lover, what a husband, have I lost! How lost him! Ah, my dearest mother, 'till my eyes, by the chilling hand of death, are closed, eternally will they be open to tears! 'till my heart ceases to beat, its language will be sighs: I cannot, cannot suppress them! One circumstance! one fatal circumstance, why have I so long concealed? Oh, madam, guess my situation! Three months since I thought an addition to my felicity, but now an aggravation to my misery!

Why did not I reveal it sooner! something of fear, of timidity: God! I hardly know what it was that withheld me!

Poor, insensible infant! where is now thy father? where is now my husband? Thou hast a father, yet wilt be born an orphan. I have a husband, yet must hug thee to my widowed bosom!

Lady Emma knows this increase to my sorrows; kind, excellent, lady Emma! Her tenderness supports me when my spirits suffer the most cruel dejection; she throws aside her natural gaiety, as a robe which is put on and off at pleasure, and becomes the philosophical reasoner, the consoling companion. For her sake, methinks, I could pardon any thing but premeditated vice, if a reconciliation on her brother's side had been attempted; but now honour forbids I should ever suffer his expostulations, or even entertain a thought in favour of him!

O heavens! why was I so ready to promote my own destruction? Why did I snatch the wretch from her paramour? Had they gone together, how many evils might have been avoided! My lord was then but second in her low estimation! That very day on which he abandoned me to all the horrors of my fate, the fellow who shared with him the favour of the worst of creatures, seeing his lordship leave the castle, burst into my chamber, where
I had

I had retired to indulge my grief; and in an agony, if possible, greater than my own, threw himself at my feet; I come, madam, said he, to implore your ladyship's pardon for crimes almost too black for mercy. I have deceived you. Miss Saxby has deceived you. Your lord injures you. No, you cannot pardon me. Heaven guard your ladyship. I go, but my prayers shall be with you.

I was so astonished at his appearance and words, that he was gone before I had power to reply. I sent after him, but he had left the castle. Saxby's elopement explained his meaning. He had resigned her to his lord, and repentance had overtaken him.

My dear, amiable Fanny, the part you take in my distress afflicts me! Forget that I am unhappy! Turn all your thoughts on supporting the best of parents! and do you, my dearest mother, be comforted by her tender consolation.

LETTER XXIX.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Lady EMMA
CHELSEA.

CONDESCENDING excellence! To my lips I rivet your letter! and have a thousand times pressed it to a heart overflowing with gratitude.

Had I been honoured by my charming correspondent on an occasion less unhappy than that from which I am favoured, by Heaven, I should have grown giddy in looking from a height of felicity which I durst not have aspired to. Yet to reflect through what means I have attained this dazzling summit, has, I confess, thrown over the fervency of my joy a veil of dejection, which friendship forbids me to remove!

Nancy Saxby! Pardon me, madam, strong as circumstances appear against your brother, it is impossible he can have deserted the countess for Nancy Saxby! If
he

he has lost his honour, surely his sight, his hearing, cannot be impaired! That refined taste which directed his first choice, cannot have so absolutely deserted him! I do not take upon me to pronounce him innocent! neither know I how to believe him guilty! His conduct is mysterious! It must be cleared up to his honour, or confirmed to his disadvantage! I would set about this task immediately, but am prevented by the indisposition of my youngest brother, whose recovery from a violent fever is yet doubtful.

Lady Emma affords me a perpetual source of admiration! I adore her tenderness! I revere her discretion! Surely, madam, Heaven inspired you with the thoughts of engaging Cusack to write what passes at the Chace, without the privacy of your sister. How infinitely considerate! Indeed, as matters are situated, the countess should hear the name of her lord as seldom as possible, as it may be necessary she should, for her own peace, endeavour to forget him. Adieu, madam, I kiss your fair hands with the most tender respect.

LETTER XXX.

Miss FANNY ARCHER to MARGARETTA

Countess of Rainsford.

ALAS, my sister! disobedience is not my crime, because involuntary! I cannot obey your commands! I cannot forget you are unhappy! Yet, in some degree, I try to follow your ladyship's instructions, and in the trial have lost my sincerity. Yes, I am become an artful dissembler, to a mother too, who, 'till this period, I would have died rather than deceived. In her presence I disguise my pungent concern; I hide it with as much caution as a thief conceals the riches he has pilfered. Indeed, the load I carry is not a treasure; but had I taken it from my dear sister; had I, by my own, lessened her burthen, I would not repine, I would not complain, though I sunk beneath it.

Never,

Never, never will I listen to deceitful man! Is not lord Rainsford fallen? Who then can stand? Neither will I any more credit the tears of penitence! Did not Nancy Saxby shed them profusely? Where are the fruits of her repentance?

Time may take away the keen edge of our afflictions; I say Our; for as the briny waves are influenced by Night's illuminating planet, so shall my tears be governed by the indisposition of my sister.

Whilst the life of our most revered parent is preserved to us, I will be her constant companion; but oh! if ever we should have the misfortune to lose this inestimable blessing, I fly to your arms! I will have no other protector! My heart shall be your own, unless you permit me to give a part to lady Emma Chelsea, who I must love, notwithstanding she is the sister of lord Rainsford.

Could my prayers prevail for the restoration of your happiness, I would offer them incessantly.

Comfort yourself, my beloved coun-
 tess; our mother is supported by a for-
 titude that never, in the greatest exigence,
 deserts

deserts her. Her grief will not, I hope, be pernicious to her health; it is steady, but serene and moderate. Her blessing is united with the fond affection of your Fanny Archer.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

Cusack to Lady EMMA CHELSEA.

DURING the eighteen days my lord has secluded himself at Buckman Chace, I have not one moment lost sight of your ladyship's commands, which inclination, as well as duty, compels me to obey with the strictest observance.

Alas ! I am an old man ! I have seen the earldom of Rainsford devolve from father to son, on three successive generations, and am grown grey in the service of your noble family.

I know my station, madam ; I know it would be presumption in me to enquire into the concerns of my patron. It is enough that I weep in silence ! that my dim eyes overflow at an alteration which I can by no means account for.

Pardon, my good young lady, a boldness that proceeds from such an affection (if I durst so express myself) as I should have

have felt for children of my own. What have I said? My children! Yes, I did say my children! But in that fund of love, I forget not the reverence due to my honoured lord, and his exalted countess. I told you, madam, I had not lost sight of your ladyship's commands; indeed I have not. My lord continues to treat me with his usual condescension, by which means I have frequent opportunities of observing his words, his looks, his actions, all sadly, very sadly, reversed, from what they were at the castle. He yesterday threw out a hint, he never should return thither. Heaven grant this old man, rather than see a disunion of the most excellent pair in the world, might be laid in the silent bosom of his grave. Such a blow would send him thither with anguish unutterable.

Your brother, madam, can scarce be deemed an inhabitant of Buckman Chace. He leaves the house early in the morning; sometimes stays out the whole day; sometimes returns at the hour of dinner, and goes out again as soon as it is over. A book is his only companion in these excursions; I have not presumed to follow him; his commands are to the contrary.

I fear

I fear his lordship's nights are unrefreshing; I lie in a closet joining to his chamber, from whence I hear how he spends those hours due to forgetfulness.

Sleep he cannot; I am sure he cannot: I hear him at all seasons. Shall I, his old servant, unwatchful of my lord, know the sweets of repose, whilst he is unacquainted with it? Heaven forbid!

At early dawn I carry him his chocolate; he dresses hastily; if to throw his cloaths about him with an air of despondency, may be called to dress; and hurries from the house, as though it was dreadful for him to remain in it.

He often mentions your ladyship, the countess, and Sir Edward Onslow; calling upon you with an emotion that shews he is not happy: neither does he forget the young lady to whom he is guardian; her name is often mentioned with those honoured ones I have repeated.

This being all the information I can give at present: I beg leave to conclude myself your ladyship's most devoted, dutiful and obedient servant,

JAMES CUSACK.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Lady EMMA
CHELSEA

TO-morrow, madam, at all events, I
set off for Buckman Chace. My
imagination is perpetually haunted by lord
Rainsford. The heart that can only feel
for itself, I detest; mine is governed by
sympathy! by affection! Necessity com-
pels my return to town in three days, my
brother's disorder having not yet left him.
Adieu, madam, you shall soon again hear
from me.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

Lady EMMA CHELSEA to the Honourable
Mrs. ARCHER.

FORGET, madam, that Rainsford is my brother; consider me rather as the sister of my beloved countess; admit me in that light to your presence; in the other I should blush to approach you.

Methinks, at this instant, I hear you say to your Fanny, with an air of the most charming benignity, Lady Emma is not to blame; she was not the confidant of her brother's crimes; she has not been aiding to the unhappiness of my child; why then drive her from your affection? why refuse her a tender participation in your confidence?

Thank you, madam; thank you, Miss Archer. I please myself, that neither will disdain the friendship I warmly offer, nor confound the innocent with the guilty.

I inclose

I inclose three letters which I have received from Sir Edward Onslow, and one from Cusack; they will inform you of the steps we are taking without the privacy of my sister; in her present situation, she must know but little of the wretch her husband. To lady Rainsford I durst not have called him wretch. You too, madam, I am afraid, will condemn me; for how came the countess by her exalted notions of forgiveness, but from your example and instruction?

I am warm; and who that is so unfortunate can set bounds to their resentment.

I shall continue to communicate in secret whatever intelligence I receive. Do not, by refusing me the honour of your correspondence, add fresh mortification to the already too much mortified Emma Chelsea.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

To the SAME.

LORD bless me! how I tremble! how I am still fluttered! Sir Edward Onslow is now with us! Nancy Saxby nowhere concealed in the neighbourhood of Buckman Chace! He assures me she is not.

Nothing could equal my amazement when Sir Edward stood before me! his presence unexpected! never dreaming he would call on his return to town.

For Heaven's sake, madam, said he, with an air of the most eager concern, Allow me a moment before the countess surprises me here. Lead me to any private place, where I may discover to you the reason of my visit. I was all over consternation; I gave him my hand; and, hardly knowing what I did, led him to a closet where my sister never comes, because once dedicated to the private hours of her lord.

For God's sake, Sir Edward, cried I, recovering my breath a little, relieve my suspense?

suspence; Have you been at Buckman Chace? Have you seen my brother? Does he confess? Does he repent? How did he look? What did he say? How did he receive you?

Yes, madam, replied he, I have been at Buckman Chace; but——there he stopped. But what, Sir Edward! O speak, or I shall expire of apprehension!

I have not seen your brother! He shuns me! he flies from me! A man avoids not his declared enemy as Rainsford does his Onslow!

Wonder not, Sir, returned I; he who blushes at his own actions, will try to conceal them from the eye of a virtuous friend; he shuns, he flies from, because he is ashamed to meet you. O, Sir Edward, you once remembered him a very different creature! I took out my handkerchief; my emotion disconcerted him; but on expressing the strongest impatience for his interesting recital, he gave it me in the following words.

Soon after I had the honour of writing your ladyship of my intentions, I set out for Buckman Chace: my eagerness to get there prevented me from going to bed that night,

night, and enabled me to reach the little inn near my lord's seat before seven the next morning. Here I left my servant and horses; and being directed across the fields, reached it in about ten minutes.

The first person I met was the faithful Cusack, whose joy, at seeing me, ran over at his eyes; and from him I learnt that my lord had not left his bed. Whilst I live, I shall honour, I shall revere this venerable grey-headed old man. Never beheld I grief and anxiety more strongly delineated than on his furrowed countenance.

I shook him by the hand with a kind of reverential tenderness, and told him I was sorry to see an alteration not favourable to his health. Alas, Sir Edward, replied he shaking his silver locks, two months of sorrow have brought me nearer home than threescore years of contentment.

Do you not, Mrs. Archer, love this dear, good creature? My father revered him; so did my grandfather: he was well born, genteelly educated, and in our family has lived, respected and beloved, near fifty years.

Having (continued Sir Edward) talked a few minutes with Cusack, he went to his lord's

lord's apartment, to acquaint him I was below. I have since severely repented I let him go without me. Foolish punctilio restrained my impatience; and I waited his return never dreaming I should be denied admittance. My mortification was more than words can express, when he came back, and assured me his lord absolutely refused to see me. Not see me! exclaimed I, starting back several paces; be Heaven! he shall, he must see me!

Sir Edward, replied the good Cusack, I have ventured to hint your disappointment; he was angry at my boldness, and called me officious old man; the next moment he condescended to ask my pardon, threw his arms about me, and declared I was dear to his soul, but said he could not now bear contradiction. Here the worthy creature wiped his eyes, whilst I was almost softened to as great a degree; then lifting them to Heaven, he cried, Merciful God, restore my beloved lord to himself! to his suffering countess! to his friend! to the world! to happiness!

Most fervently did I join in his devout ejaculation; and having considered a moment, I desired he would conduct me to the door of his lord's apartment: this he readily

readily complied with ; and leaving me there, retired at a distance.

I saw him, through the key-hole, traversing his chamber, with an emotion that his very step betrayed. When he heard my voice, intreating him to admit me in the most moving terms of friendship, his sobs were audible. I repeated them ; he came towards the door ; he took the lock in his hand ; again he quitted it hastily, and turned away : a long time he seemed quite irresolute, now advancing, now retreating ; I still importuning him for entrance. He came once more to the door ; and, just as I thought him about to admit me, he stopped short, and cried out, in a kind of frantic accent, No ! it shall not be open'd ! I will not see this generous, this honourable friend ! by all the holy saints, I will not ! Hold ! hold ! my lord, interrupted I, what have you said ! Nothing, returned he, but what are my most firm and steady resolves ! Go, Onslow, it is not fit we should meet ! the breast darkened by concealed crimes should hide itself from justice ! from the vengeance of a friend deceived ! Pry'thee, Onslow, retire ! He was here silent, and I could not get from him another word.

Shall

Shall I confess to you, ladies, that when Sir Edward came to this part of his recital, I felt myself agitated by a sensation not unlike pity! Again it returns! I must give way to its soft pleadings! You do not see me weep! but indeed, indeed, I am guilty! The remorse of this perfidious brother touches me with compassion! Consider he was once my virtuous, dear, tender brother, and forgive my weakness.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

To the SAME. In Continuation.

INVOLUNTARY pleadings of nature are not to be resisted! Her voice, I am now convinced, is never to be entirely silenced by discording sounds of injuries and resentment! Yet assure yourself, madam, strong as I experience this irresistible impulse, it shall on no terms mislead me to a forgiveness which the mother of lady Rainford may not condescend to strengthen and confirm. Forgiveness! how extensive the meaning of that word! to pity our greatest enemy, to feel for his distress, to assist him, is to forgive; forgiveness is a duty we owe each other; but then we are not obliged to take an enemy to our bosom; to caress him, or again put into his hand the dagger with which he stabbed us. If Mrs. Archer should disapprove these sentiments, let her correct them, and permit me to return to my conference with Sir Edward.

Something, lady Emma, continued he, lies concealed in the mind of lord Rainford! O God! may I never entertain a thought which I dare not reveal to my friend! Did he think I would presume to reflect, to upbraid? Did he think I should basely expose him? If not, what a cruel diffidence is his!

I left the house, filled with more sorrow than resentment at my unkind reception; without hinting to Culack, who saw me to the door, any suspicion of his lord's amour with Miss Saxby. I enquired of him about the neighbourhood; and finding it chiefly consisted of farm-houses and little hamlets, I took my leave, determined to discover the horrid girl's retreat.

All that day my search lasted, but to no purpose; the meanest cottage did not escape inspection, my enquiries were so particular; and when the inhabitants answered to my questions, I watched every turn of their countenance with so quick penetration, that if her guilty abode had been within five miles of my lord's seat, it is impossible I could have missed it.

My expedition closed with the day. It was late when I returned to my inn, where I rested that night; and the next morning,
making

making another fruitless attempt to see your brother, I hastened towards the castle. He was going to say something more, when my sister appeared in a walk before the window; and being afraid she would surprise us, we went immediately to join her.

The lovely, sorrowing countess, whose situation is now visible, caught the eye of our friend as she moved towards us. He examined her shape with a penetration that did not escape me; nor could I overlook the manly concern, pity and tenderness, which eloquently spoke upon his countenance. Sir Edward Onslow, my dearest sister! stepping forward as he stood wrapped in silent wonder, his hands and eyes lifted to heaven, Will you not tell our valuable friend he is welcome?

Sir Edward, said she, going up to him with an air of the most piercing melancholy, this visit is kind, exceeding kind. His eyes were full; his heart, I am sure, was full also. He tried to speak, but could not utter a syllable.

Generous, good Sir Edward! continued she, laying her hand on his, suppress your friendly concern. Strange alterations have happened since we last met on this spot, but—— She was proceeding, when Sir

Edward, by his example, occasioned such a scene of silent woe, as cannot be described.

Thank God, she was more composed, and Sir Edward more himself, when I left them together, in order to transmit those particulars to Row-Park, my memory being never very bright, at this time more than commonly dull.

Sir Edward leaves us in a few hours; he is still with the countess. This instant they are come in sight of my windows: she is leaning on his arm; I fear she will suffer too much fatigue; I will go to them, and persuade her not to walk longer. What can he have been saying? what comfort administered? Never saw I such an alteration! Her charming countenance seems to have lost a degree of its usual melancholy: I go to know whence this gleam of pleasure arises; I suppose from some innocent artifice of Sir Edward to lull her into hope. Alluring hope; but ah! how often, how very often, deceitful!

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
Miss FANNY ARCHER.

INDEED, my dear girl, the tender affection which, like a healing balm, you would pour into my disappointed mind, instead of answering the salutary purpose you intend, has added a smarting pain to what I felt before.

Can my sympathising Fanny suppose, that by passing her days in solitude, avoiding mankind, and giving up her gentle bosom to fell suspicion, my distress will diminish? O no! it can only serve to increase it.

Retract, my sister, from a resolution which has so much alarmed me! When a man addresses you on the score of love, hear him without prejudice! Think not of my lot, when you question your heart how it stands affected towards him! Think not of lord Rainsford when you give an answer, whether encouraging, or the reverse. Perhaps you hold it early enough to entertain

serious reflections on these matters; certainly no time has elapsed which so prudent a young creature would regret, but my Fanny is now shooting into a woman. I only mean by what I have insinuated, that she should not reject a worthy man, one who will make her happy, because I have been unfortunate.

Think me not so unjust, so narrow minded, as to involve his whole sex in the perfidy of my lord. He, as you observe, is fallen! I know! I feel that he is humbled! But let me not with one, drag down a multitude, whose footing may be secured on the rock of virtue.

O, my dearest sister, whenever you leave the single state, may your early prospects, like mine, bloom with luxurious happiness; but prevent it, Heaven! that, like mine, they wither in the bud, fade, and untimely die, by the chilling blast of disappointment.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

MARGARETTA Countess of Rainsford, to
the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

SIR Edward Onslow, who has the most humane and tender heart that ever man possessed, has just left the castle. His presence has revived me; and a certain discovery I have made of his inclinations, gives me new life: his visit was equally unexpected by lady Emma and myself; she brought him to me as I was walking in the garden; and soon after left us together, too much softened by a scene which I will not here attempt to describe. Sir Edward offered me his arm; I accepted it, and we continued our walk.

Tell me, Sir, said I, seeing him deeply and silently affected by my distress; tell me, if together with my own, it is necessary I should lose the cheerfulness of my friends? Perceive you not how much is flown of lady Emma's vivacity?

I see, I honour, I adore her sensibility, replied he, a conscious glow rising on his manly cheek.

But indeed, continued I, you both sacrifice too largely on the altar of friendship: why am I so unfortunate as to involve all who are connected with me in my affliction?

Better, madam, returned Sir Edward, your friends suffer with you, than that you should lavish your esteem on wretches devoid of humanity; by Heaven, he who stands a calm, unconcerned spectator, of lady Rainsford's trials, deserves not the appellation of human! Can Onslow, can lady Emma, indulge a look, a thought of gaiety, whilst you weep? Can a spark of joy light in their bosom, which your tears will not extinguish?

Had you seen his fervour at this moment, you would not wonder, my dearest mother, that it touched my very soul; and I said with energy equal to his own.

My dear friend! my amiable sister! you must both be happy, whatever is my fate. An union of soul, of sentiment, of manners,

ners, speaks the design of Heaven, when it found a pair so perfect. Sir Edward, you love lady Emma; I have discovered your passion in this short interview. May she reward it! may your virtues be the reward of each other.

He fell at my feet, and pressing my hands to his lips, surprised me with this reply; For Heaven's sake, lady Rainsford, as you are mistress of my secret, confine it in your own breast; let it not escape, to betray me to your charming sister.

How! Sir Edward, said I, obliging him to rise, can you love my sister, and determine to conceal your preference? Can you risk her favour, which, whilst you are silent, she may perhaps bestow on a less deserving rival? Let me intreat you will not remain in suspense, when in your power to be assured.

Lady Emma, madam, returned he, is dear to me as my soul; yet shall I talk to her of love, when she is oppressed with grief? Shall I entertain her with proposing happiness to ourselves, whilst you are miserable? No, lady Rainsford! before I declare my ambitious hopes, I must approve myself not unworthy the title of
G 5 a faith-

a faithful lover, by deserving that of a steady friend. He was proceeding, when lady Emma, always solicitous for my health, came to chide me for having walked too long, and our conversation became general.

I am mortified that Sir Edward will not discover his attachment to my sister, 'till my affairs have taken a more favourable turn : alas ! what favourable turn can they take ? Why poison his own felicity by waiting an event which can never happen ? Was ever friendship so fervent, so delicate, as Sir Edward's ? About four years since, this amiable young man met a severe disappointment in love, something of which he accidentally hinted to lady Emma : she asked him for the particulars ; he politely begged to be excused from wasting moments so precious to him in dull narrative ; but promised, as soon as he went from the castle, he would obey her with exactness, making it a matter of favour that she would condescend to interest herself in his concerns. Poor lady Emma ! I believe at that moment she felt a certain softness, of which her heart was conscious ; for colouring excessively, she dropped the topic with as much precipitation as a child lets fall the burning coal with which he has scorched his

his fingers. Though all my fond expectations are flown, to the happiness of my friends I cannot be insensible. When I think of an alliance between lady Emma and Sir Edward, I feel unusual pleasure. In the felicity of others I may yet rejoice, but never, never, can I forget my own misfortune.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lady EMMA CHELSEA to the Honourable
Mrs. ARCHER.

ANOTHER letter from Cusack. Heavens! how are we more and more involved in perplexities! I long to animadvert; I long to say a thousand things, to ask a thousand questions; but my sister follows me incessantly. Adieu, adieu, my dear madam, the countess is at my elbow.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXIX.

CUSACK to lady EMMA CHELSEA, inclosed in the preceding.

DO you know, madam, that Sir Edward Onslow has made a visit to my lord? Do you know he refused to see him? Doubtless, your ladyship cannot be uninformed of these particulars. Alas, I have others to relate, which, in obedience to your commands, I dare not suppress; though, my good young lady, I know they will afflict you greatly.

Soon, madam, as your brother was ascertained of Sir Edward's departure, he left his room, and went abroad, as usual, on foot, and unattended.

I was not much disappointed when his lordship failed to return at the hour of dinner, because he has often absented himself in like manner; but my apprehensions were terrible when night came fast upon me; and I ventured out in pursuit of him without

without success; nor did I again see his honoured face 'till between five and six o'clock the next morning. In what a situation did I then behold him! Ah, lady Emma, the countess would have died with grief, had she seen her dear lord as I saw him, pale, fainting, trembling, eyes streaming, breast heaving, hands lifted, and, withal, such a dreadful fierceness in his looks, as terrifies me to recollect.

Since that fatal moment, he has not eat, he has not drank, he has not slept, I may say, he has hardly spoke. What fearful accident has he now encountered to work up his soul to such a pitch of unutterable disorder? Pardon, madam, the presumption of your servant; I would give up the remainder of my days to know, and to remove the cause of my despondency.

The bell from his apartment this moment summonses me.

His lordship is better, madam. O my excellent lady, how I rejoice to send you those tidings! He has spoke to me; he has called me his faithful friend; my old heart bounds at the honour it receives.

Heaven be praised my lord continues to mend; he is much better, much more composed

composed he has ordered chocolate, and says he will try to refresh himself by sleep.

My aged knees shall bend to Heaven for the restoration of his peace, and the peace of his countess, who, for the last five weeks, he has never ceased to mention, in terms so tender, so pathetic, as quite unmans me. I retire to an humble distance; there I watch his motions. As he stands gazing on the beautiful portrait of his beloved lady, with the big tears rolling down his cheeks, I feel my bosom heaving with concern, and my face moistened by compassion.

I dare not say how very warmly I am bound to your ladyship's family, how very tenderly to my dear lord. When I think of their virtues, when I contemplate their favours, it makes the ebbing tide of life flow afresh in the veins of their and your ladyship's most grateful and obedient servant.

JAMES CUSACK.

LETTER

LETTER XL

Lady EMMA CHELSEA to the Honourable Mrs. ARCHER.

I SEND you a million of thanks ; I send you a thousand embraces, my indulgent mother, my much loved sister, for those tender assurances you are pleased to give me in the letter I have just received. (This letter omitted).

You say you will love the sister of Rainsford ; you promise that you will love her with unreserved affection ; you will even allow her to call you by those dear names which unite you to the countess.

I am charmed with this condescension : believe me, ladies, Emma Chelsea never shall abuse your favour.

Certainly, madam, you possess, in its utmost perfection, the fine art which, of all others, I would wish to acquire ; that of imparting self-satisfaction, or rather self-consequence,

consequence, to the diffident: me you have raised from a humiliating lowness: I may add, you have reconciled me to myself. As the sister of a wretched ingrate, I shrunk into nothing; as the avowed friend of Mrs. Archer, I am raised to that degree of importance which I fancied myself to have lost by his means.

I am not the only person who is so happy to taste the grateful sweets of sentiments, refined, extensive, generous. Your proposal of acquainting Cusack of what he durst not ask, though he would die to know, is another proof of your goodness; I am charmed with it; it delights me infinitely; how will his worthy heart be elated by such a mark of confidence?

You bid me, madam, lay before him the whole affair; you look upon him as a valuable friend; you would therefore treat him with the unreservedness of friendship; what true greatness of soul, what charming humility is here! More, much more could I say on the exhaustless subject, was I not writing to my mother, whose delicacy may be offended. O how proud am I of the nominal title of your daughter!

I am grown amazingly artful; I never sit down at my writing-desk, without some work

work at my side. In case of a surprisal from the countess, I catch it hastily up, looking so steady, so industrious, that she does not guess I have had a pen in my fingers.

My next task is to obey your commands in regard to Cusack ; I shall execute them with pleasure ; it is a mark of confidence that will not only make the good old man happy, but also give a keener edge to his attention. He will observe my brother's actions with a more penetrating eye, and not let the most trivial circumstance escape his notice.

I have formed, in the airy regions of fancy, many confused ideas, to account for his lordship's absence from Buckman Chace, and the horrible disorder in which he returned thither ; and at last I have fixed on one which seems to wear at least an air of probability. Perhaps he had been that very day with the vile, prostituted Saxby. As to Sir Edward's insisting she is no where concealed in the neighbourhood, he may be mistaken, he may have been misinformed. Let me then go on with my supposition. Perhaps, in this interview, she may have offended his lordship : words, perhaps, rose high ; a parting might have been the consequence, and this
very

very parting may have occasioned his discomposure. Horrid wretch ! after his first infatuation, to what lengths may he not be carried by his blind, absurd, ridiculous passion !

When I reflect on the ingratitude, the folly, the vices of this man, I forget that he is my brother ; I forget that I ever loved him ; I think of him with horror, and every sentiment of pity is extinguished in my bosom.

My indignation arises so fast, that if I do not drop my pen, it will pass the boundaries to which I would ever confine it.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

Sir EDWARD ONSLOW to Lady EMMA
CHELSEA.

YOUR ladyship's commands were a brace of gold and silver pheasants, a Virginia nightingale, parrot, and Canary birds; all of which have now the honour of attending you, in hopes to peck a delicate morsel from the loveliest, fairest hands in the universe.

Every morning, if you allure them with the music of your voice, they will hover round your window, having all the gentleness of your sex, all the ambition of ours. Were they gifted with speech, and not insensible to gratitude, how many thousand acknowledgements might I expect for removing them from Cary Grove to Rainford Castle! No doubt, they would insist on my naming a reward for so signal a service: I would name it; and this it should be; to the pheasants I would give it in charge, I would command them on their duty, whenever lady Emma walked the
verdant

verdant lawn, to run before, to display their variegated plumage, and entertain the enchanting eye of their fair mistress. The nightingale should sooth, and Canary birds divert, her melancholy. The parrot's task is yet unassigned; forgive my boldness, madam, if it might be permitted, that it should sometimes presume to remind you of Onslow.

Your ladyship has seen my brother Robert. If you remember, madam, I had the honour of introducing him to you in his way to London. I am just come from assisting at his nuptials, an event which he has taken pains to celebrate with that spirit of liberality so peculiar to his profession, a profession of which he is no dishonourable member. Has your ladyship any curiosity to know the manner in which it was conducted?

Cornelly's apartments being previously bespoke, and properly decorated, the bride and bridegroom adjourned thither from St. James's chapel about eleven, where they were saluted by a numerous assembly brought together by a general invitation.

Breakfast and a band of music closed the morning; after which we were regaled with

with a profusion of elegancies at the Star and Garter.

On my conscience, I believe all the admirals, commodores, and captains in the navy, with their wives, sweet-hearts, daughters, sisters, and cousins, for seven generations, were present on this occasion.

Mrs. Onslow seemed highly pleased with her office, or I should have greatly pitied her expence of spirits. To confess a truth, in justice to my new sister, I never saw any woman acquit herself with more ease, grace, and good humour.

I honour the judgment of my brother; and indeed he appeared to honour it himself, by the honest pleasure he betrayed in his eyes whenever they encountered those of his bride; yet, lady Emma is neither young, nor very handsome; on the contrary, thirty-five years has she been improving a disposition naturally sweet and amiable, amply supplying the defects of person by such intellectual qualifications as captivate the whole soul of a worthy creature, whose study, I am convinced, will be to make her happy.

I can admire, I can revere, good nature, judgment, wit; but ah, my charming friend,

friend, how much stronger have I experienced their force when enshrined in the snowy bosom, darting from the keen eye, or stealing from the roseate lips of resplendent beauty. It would be folly, it would be madness, to resist the power of these united graces: shew me the man who could behold them, and keep his freedom: shew me the man who would even wish to keep it: he must be stupidly insensible, a wretch indeed, who would not glory in such a captivity.

I avoid speaking of your brother, madam; if I ask concerning him, of what can your ladyship inform me? What alteration can we yet expect? For a happy one, I offer up my warmest wishes; I offer them from various motives, interested and disinterested. Lady Rainsford knows my heart; she only can judge with what unaffected fervency I offer them.

I dare not trust myself on this subject; I shall be too presuming.

Adieu, my lovely correspondent. Tell the countess, she has not in the world a friend more sincere, more devoted to her service, than Onslow. Request, that she will command him freely.

